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Archive Number 20020809.5011

Published Date 09-AUG-2002

Subject PRO/AH/EDR> Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome update 2002 - USA (03)

HANTAVIRUS PULMONARY SYNDROME UPDATE 2002 - USA (03)

A ProMED-mail post
<<http://www.promedmail.org>>

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in these updates:
[1] Correction
[2] Arizona & Texas
[3] Oklahoma

[1]
Date: Sun 21 Jul 2002
From: Charlie Calisher <calisher@cybersafe.net>

A Comment on the Efficiency of Protective Masks

In "Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome update 2002 - USA (02)", a local official in Wyoming was quoted as having said "What we're recommending if you work in an area or are going into an area where there might be rodent droppings is wear a mask, a simple woodworker's mask will do. It's a pretty simple way to protect yourself".

If what is meant by a "simple woodworker's mask" is one of those paper masks painters wear, this is not at all correct. These things will keep most large objects (elbows, fingers, cigars, some paint, wood dust) from one's nose and mouth but viruses are not large objects. People who intend to enter areas in which hantaviruses might be in aerosol form should be advised to wear fitted respirators with adequate filtration systems.

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[2]
Date: Wed 24 Jul 2002
From: John Moore <wx-chase@tinyvital.com>
Source: The Arizona Republic, Wed 24 Jul 2002 [edited]

Arizona & Texas: 2 of 3 Affected Members of Same Family Die

[A middle aged male] realized about the sixth inning of a Diamondbacks game in June that he was coming down with the rare disease that had just killed his mother and sister. "By the time I got home my fever was 101 and my wife said, 'We're going to the emergency room,' " [he] remembered. He'd been half-expecting to get sick. He knew if he did, it probably meant he was exposed to the hantavirus when he went to Texas for the funerals in April.

When [he] was diagnosed in early June, he became the first confirmed victim in Arizona this year. Hantavirus was identified in 1993. Since then, 35 cases have been diagnosed in Arizona.

[His] nightmare began with an April phone call from his sister in Ralls, Texas. She was calling to say that their 75-year-old mother was in a hospital with what appeared to be pneumonia. By the next day, she was on a respirator. Her death was blamed on septic shock. The day after the funeral, [his 49 year old] sister, awoke in the house she shared with her mother. A paraplegic since a 1995 car accident, [she] had a 104-degree fever. A day later, she, too, was dead. Again, death was blamed on septic shock. A chance conversation days later between his sister's ex-husband and a nurse uncovered the real cause. "She said it sounded an awful lot like hantavirus because they both went so quickly," [he] said.

[He] researched hantavirus on the Internet and found out that low blood platelet counts are a symptom. Once he confirmed his sister's low platelet counts, "we knew then everyone in the family had been exposed," he said. He returned to Phoenix and prepared for the worst. After learning the incubation period of hantavirus is 1 to 6 weeks, [he] and 30 family members in Arizona and Texas circled 10 Jun 2002 on their calendars, 6 weeks after their exposure. "If we got past that date, we would be OK," he said. On 19 May 2002, [he] felt the symptoms he had been dreading. He and his wife went to the emergency room carrying information about hantavirus.

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[It is not clear from this dramatic story whether the presumptive diagnoses of hantavirus pulmonary syndrome were confirmed by laboratory tests. Further information would be appreciated. - Mod.CP]

[3]

Date: Fri 9 Aug 2002
From: ProMED-mail <promed@promedmail.org>
Source: The Oklahoman, Fri 9 Aug 2002 [edited]
<http://www.newsok.com/cgi-bin/show_article?ID=898297&pic=none&TP=getarticle>

Oklahoma: Hantavirus Infection Suspected as Cause of Death of Ranch Worker

GUYMON: A Texas County ranch worker died this week from hantavirus infection, marking the second Oklahoma fatality caused by the disease in less than a year, health officials said on Thu 8 Aug 2002. [The 31-year-old male] went to Memorial Hospital of Texas County last weekend complaining of a headache and breathing troubles. Within hours of arriving at the hospital, [his] low-grade fever spiked to 105 degrees. He died on Tue 6 Aug 2002. [He] is the third case of hantavirus infection [confirmation is still pending; see below - Mod.CP] in Oklahoma since 1996. The first victim survived, but a 17-year-old girl died in November 2001. What is unsettling to local health officials is that all 3 cases occurred in Texas County, about 15 miles southwest of Guymon.

Hantavirus kills about 1 out of every 3 people it infects. The disease [caused by _Sin Nombre virus_] is carried by deer mice, which leave disease-infested droppings in their nests. When those areas are disturbed, particles from the droppings can be inhaled by people, causing respiratory infection. The disease was not officially identified until 1993. In that year, health officials investigated the deaths of 5 previously healthy people who had succumbed to respiratory failure. They all lived in the "4 corners" area of Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, and Arizona. The [hantavirus] they discovered was dubbed [4 corners virus and later Sin Nombre virus] the same virus found in all 3 Texas County cases.

Person-to-person spread of the disease is considered highly unlikely, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Janet Jones, Texas County Health Department administrator, said investigators have sent tissue samples to the CDC for testing and expect results possibly today or early next week. Investigators have not confirmed [that the patient] had the virus. [The patient] exhibited signs of hantavirus pulmonary syndrome -- the official name for the lung infection caused by the [virus] -- when he was hospitalized on Sat 3 Aug 2002, Jones said.

Beginning symptoms, which usually last 5 to 10 days, include headache and aching muscles. As the [disease] progresses, the lungs fill with fluid, making breathing difficult. "The early symptoms are very ambiguous, and the changes are very sudden," Jones said. For example, people tend to get very ill quickly, she said, or get well very quickly. Officials are unsure how [the case] may have contracted the virus. Investigators from the state Health Department's epidemiology division also are trying to find a connection among the three Texas County cases, Jones said.

[Byline: Bob Doucette and Dawn Marks]

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[see also:

Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome - USA (Arizona) [20020607.4429](#)
Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome - USA (Colorado) [20020605.4411](#)
Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome - USA (Nebraska) [20020702.4650](#)
Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome - USA (Texas) [20020512.4180](#)
Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome - USA (Texas) (02) [20020515.4220](#)
Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome - USA (Utah) [20020505.4105](#)
Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome - USA (Utah) (02) [20020508.4135](#)
Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome - USA (Utah) (03) [20020609.4446](#)
Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome - USA (Utah) (04) [20020628.4626](#)
Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome update 2002 - USA (01) [20020630.4641](#)
Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome update 2002 - USA (02) [20020718.4794](#)
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Hantavirus pulm. synd. - USA-wide update [20000604.0893](#)
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