

LEGIONELLOSIS, HOSPITAL ACQUIRED - USA (NEW YORK)

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

ProMED-mail is a program of the International Society for Infectious Diseases
<<http://www.isid.org>>

Date: Thu, 14 Jul 2005

From: ProMED-mail <promed@promedmail.org>

Source: Newsday (NY) [edited]

<<http://www.newsday.com/news/local/wire/newyork/ny-bc-ny--legionnairesdise0714jul14,0,2467580.story?coll=ny-region-apnewyork>>

9 cases among New Rochelle hospital patients

At least 9 people who were patients at Sound Shore Medical Center have contracted Legionnaires' disease in the past month [Jun 2005], possibly from contaminated water in a hospital cooling tower, the Westchester County Health Department said Thu, 14 Jul 2005.

About half a dozen more patients with pneumonia are being checked for the ailment, said department spokeswoman Mary Landrigan. No deaths have been reported. 5 of the 9 cases have been discharged from Sound Shore or other hospitals and have recovered or are recovering at home, the department said. 4 patients remain hospitalized, all in stable condition.

An initial test of water samples from an outdoor cooling tower at Sound Shore indicated the presence of the legionella bacteria that cause Legionnaires' disease, the department said. Follow-up testing is underway to confirm the finding and the unit is being disinfected, said Health Commissioner Joshua Lipsman.

Landrigan said of the 9 people, some were inpatients and some were outpatients at Sound Shore before contracting the disease, a form of pneumonia that is spread through the air but not person-to-person.

Most people exposed to the bacteria never get sick, but the elderly and people with weak immune systems are more susceptible. The disease is treatable with antibiotics. The victims' ages range from 34 to 83.

None were hospital staff, Landrigan said.

Lipsman said additional cases may be found "since the incubation period for legionella can be up to a few weeks after exposure."

"Anyone who develops fever and respiratory symptoms should contact his or her medical provider to be evaluated," Lipsman said.

[Byline: Jim Fitzgerald]

ProMED-mail promed@promedmail.org

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[1]

Date: Sat 16 Jul 2005

From: ProMED-mail <promed@promedmail.org>

Source: 7 Online, WABC (NY) [edited]

<http://abclocal.go.com/wabc/news/print_apress_071605_legionnaires.html>

Legionnaires' outbreak in Westchester

The number of cases of legionnaires' disease grew to 12 today, Sat 16 Jul 2005, in an outbreak at Sound Shore Medical Center in New Rochelle.

The Westchester County health department said 6 of the victims had already recovered or were recovering at home, while another 6 are hospital inpatients in stable condition.

Department spokeswoman Mary Landrigan said the count could go up again as patients with pneumonia are checked for the presence of the bacterium which causes the disease.

Health Commissioner Joshua Lipsman said that all the victims were Sound Shore outpatients who used an entrance to the hospital that took them past a cooling tower used for air conditioning. Water in the cooler tested positive for the bacteria but has been treated. Landrigan said the new cases fell into the same category.

[2]

Date: Thu 14 Jul 2005

From: ProMED-mail <promed@promedmail.org>

Source: Westchester County Department of Health news release [edited]

<<http://www.westchestergov.com/health>>

9 cases of legionnaires' disease identified in New Rochelle

The Westchester County Department of Health announced today, Thu 14 Jul 2005, that 9 cases of legionnaires' disease have been identified in New Rochelle since 21 Jun 2005.

Additional cases of patients with pneumonia are also being investigated as possible legionnaires' cases. In previous years, there have only been 7 to 10 cases of legionnaires' disease reported countywide annually.

Preliminary investigation by the New York State Department of Health and the Westchester County Department of Health indicates a possible source of contamination may be an outdoor cooling tower on the campus of the Sound Shore Medical Center. Water samples were obtained earlier this week from the hospital's cooling tower, and an initial test indicated the presence of legionella bacteria; follow-up testing is under way. Although this tower has not been confirmed as the source of the bacteria, hospital officials are voluntarily disinfecting the unit as a precautionary measure. "Sound Shore

Medical Center is to be commended for its rapid response to the possible cause of the problem by aggressive disinfection of the cooling tower," said Joshua Lipsman, commissioner of health.

John Spicer, president of Sound Shore Medical Center, assured patients and staff that the Sound Shore Medical Center is taking every precaution to assure the health and safety of staff and patients. Mr Spicer also noted that additional measures were instituted as soon as the hospital became aware of the possibility that the cooling tower might be a source. These measures included super chlorination of the cooling tower and the addition of biocide to reduce the biofilm level. The tower had been previously tested in May 2005 and was found to be negative for legionella.

"Although there has been very rapid response to this situation, it is possible that additional cases may be identified," said Dr Lipsman. Early symptoms of legionellosis may be flu-like, with muscle aches, headache, tiredness, and dry cough, followed by high fever, chills, and occasionally, diarrhea. The incubation period for legionnaires' disease is usually 2 to 10 days.

The patients identified to date all have underlying medical conditions and range in age from 34 to 83. 5 of the 9 cases have been discharged from the hospital and are recovered or recovering at home. The other 4 cases remain in hospital and are in stable condition. People with chronic illnesses are at increased risk of legionnaires' disease. The disease is rare among children and otherwise healthy people.

"Anyone who develops fever and respiratory symptoms should contact his or her medical provider to be evaluated," noted Dr Lipsman. Physicians have been alerted to include testing for legionella infection in their evaluation of appropriate patients. Specific diagnostic tests now being performed may result in a larger number of cases than usual, since clinicians do not routinely test for this disease.

Legionnaires' disease is most often contracted by inhaling aerosols from water sources such as whirlpool baths, showers, and cooling towers that are contaminated with legionella bacteria. Legionellosis is commonest during the summer season, because warm weather promotes the growth of the bacteria in the environment. There is no evidence that legionnaires' disease is spread from person to person.

Recent heavy rain fall, coupled with hot, humid weather are prime conditions for the legionella bacteria to grow and thrive. When legionella bacteria develop in a cooling system, the mist from the system can become a source of infection.

[byline: Andrew J Spano, Westchester County Executive, Joshua Lipsman, commissioner of health, Susan Tolchin, director of communications]

ProMED-mail <promed@promedmail.org>

[To prove that the cooling tower is the source of the 12 cases of legionellosis, it would be necessary to compare the strains from patients and the tower for similarity. The finding, however, that each of the infected individuals were in the area of the tower is suggestive.

It is not stated in the postings whether the affected patients had medical conditions that would predispose them to overt legionellosis. - Mod.LL]

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Date: Tue, 19 Jul 2005

From: ProMED-mail <promed@promedmail.org>

Source: Westchester.com [edited]

<http://westchester.com/Westchester_News/Westchester_Health_News/6_Additional_Cases_Of_Legionnaires'_Disease_Announced_200507195466.html>

6 more cases of legionnaires' disease announced

The Westchester County Department of Health announced today, 19 Jul 2005, that 6 additional cases of legionnaires' disease have been identified in New Rochelle, bringing the total number of cases up to 18 since 21 Jun 2005.

Other patients with pneumonia are also currently under investigation as possible cases of legionnaires' disease. All patients thus far appear to have been exposed through an outdoor cooling tower located on the grounds of Sound Shore Medical Center. In previous years only 7 to 10 cases of legionnaires' disease have been reported countywide annually.

Preliminary investigation by the New York State Department of Health and the Westchester County Department of Health indicates that a possible source of contamination may be an outdoor cooling tower on the campus of the Sound Shore Medical Center. At this time, this cooling tower has been removed from the Medical Center's premises and a replacement unit has been installed. Water samples cultured from the hospital's cooling tower last week indicated the presence of legionella bacteria, and follow-up testing is being conducted. Other sources of legionella contamination also continue to be investigated.

John Spicer, president and CEO of Sound Shore Medical Center, assured patients and staff that the Sound Shore Medical Center has taken and continues to take every precaution to assure the health and safety of staff and patients. Mr Spicer also noted that additional measures were instituted when the hospital became aware of the possibility that the cooling tower may be a source. These measures included chlorination of the cooling tower, addition of biocide to reduce the biofilm level, and the replacement of the tower on Fri, 15 Jul 2005. The tower had been previously tested in May 2005 and was found to be negative for legionella.

The patients identified to date all have underlying medical conditions or risk factors for developing legionnaires' disease and range in age from 39 to 83 years. 12 of the 18 cases have been discharged from the hospital and are recovered or recovering at home. The other 6 cases remain hospitalized and are in stable condition.

ProMED-mail <promed@promedmail.org>

[The total number of cases has doubled since the initial posting. Nosocomial (hospital acquired) legionellosis is well known. These cases are hospital acquired but from the hospital grounds. Perhaps the term could be expanded to endonosocomial (in the hospital) and exonosocomial (outside the hospital). - Mod.LL]