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Subject: PRO/EDR> Legionellosis, nursing home - USA (Pennsylvania)

LEGIONELLOSIS, NURSING HOME - USA (PENNSYLVANIA)

A ProMED-mail post

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Legionnaires' hits area nursing home

9 elderly residents of a new nursing home in Montgomery County (Pennsylvania) are reported to be ill, 5 of them diagnosed with Legionnaires' disease and the other 4 being tested for it, authorities said yesterday.

"This is a potentially life-threatening situation for everyone involved," said Susan Denman, medical director for the Madlyn and Leonard Abramson Center for Jewish Life in Horsham.

All 9 persons had lived in their own rooms on the "D Wing" of the sprawling that wing were moved into other rooms of the facility as a precaution while authorities searched for a possible source of the noncontagious bacterial illness.

The victims are all over 75 and some more than 100 years old, especially risky for a disease that can be fatal. Denman said last night that 3 of the oldest patients, all with confirmed Legionnaires' disease, had chosen to stay at the nursing home. They declined to be hospitalized, where they faced (the possibility of) being put on ventilators to survive. "They're here because they're very, very frail," Denman said. "At this point in their lives, they don't want that kind of treatment."

At Abington Memorial Hospital, where 5 of the Abramson residents were hospitalized on 11 June 2002, chief of medicine John J. Kelly stressed that there was "absolutely no risk to the community." Kelly said 1 of the home's male residents was in critical condition and a female resident in fair condition. Three others with pneumonia were at Abington awaiting Legionnaires' test results, and a fourth resident, a female, was hospitalized and awaiting tests at Central Montgomery Hospital in Hatfield Township. "Just because of their age alone, the illness is likely to be more serious," Kelly said.

Worried relatives of the home's approximately 250 residents began calling Abramson yesterday afternoon as word of the illness was reported. By last night, however, no family members had asked that a relative be removed from the facility. "I think most of the family members are reassured by the measures we are taking and that we are taking this very seriously," she said. Relatives were being notified in a detailed mailing that was sent out.

The 324-bed facility has "stopped any new admissions and will be moving any patients in the affected wing to other parts of the facility," Denman said.

The crisis at the facility, formerly known as the Philadelphia Geriatric Center, when it was located in the Logan section of Philadelphia, began last week when a resident who had been sent to Abington Memorial Hospital with what was believed to be pneumonia did not respond to treatment, Denman said.

The Montgomery County Health Department has conducted "environmental" tests in an effort to identify the source of the disease. Those test results were not expected for 2 days, department spokeswoman Harriet Morton said.

Legionnaires' disease is an airborne respiratory infection whose bacteria breed in air-conditioning cooling towers, hot-water tanks, whirlpool spas, humidifiers, faucets, shower heads and moist soil. For that reason, the county health department yesterday recommended "a thorough cleaning, disinfecting and heat-and-flush of the facility's HVAC [heating, ventilation and air-conditioning system] and potable water (e.g. showers, etc.) system. If there are therapeutic hot tubs or swimming pools, those should be included." John Hartman, the facility's director of plant operations, said he didn't know where the bacteria came from.

The elderly and those with weakened immune systems have the greatest risk of contracting the disease, Pennsylvania Health Department spokesman Richard McGarvey said yesterday. Montgomery County typically has about three a year and all of Pennsylvania about 150, McGarvey said. Many cases are never reported or identified, he added.

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[Legionella continues to be a problem in many environmental situations. Health care facilities, both in acute and chronic settings, remain environments of major importance for this infection. In this case, the occurrence of legionellosis isolated to one wing of the nursing facility implies environmental contamination of a localized source, rather than a source common to the entire structure. Since pneumonia overall represents a much more significant cause of morbidity and mortality in the elderly, those with underlying structural lung disease and patients with cellular immunosuppression, the environmental spread of legionellosis in a hospital or nursing home can be, and often is, a major event. - Mod.LL]

[See also:

Legionellosis - update	20020517.4237
Legionellosis - Australia (Melbourne): alert	20020417.3977
2001	
- ----	
Legionellosis, hospital - Australia (Melbourne)	20010108.0059
Legionellosis - Norway	20010831.2076
Legionellosis - Norway (02)	20010906.2123
Legionellosis - Spain (Pamplona)	20010822.1979
Legionellosis - Spain (Pamplona) (02)	20010822.1979
Legionellosis - Spain (Murcia)	20010711.1340
Legionellosis - Spain (Murcia) (08)	20011017.2555
Legionellosis - France (Paris)	20010717.1379
Legionellosis - UK (London): alert	20010630.1249
Legionellosis, automobile plant - USA (Ohio)	20010315.0531
2000	
- ----	
Legionellosis - Australia (Melbourne)	20000328.0451
Legionellosis - Australia (Melbourne) (09)	20000525.0833
Legionellosis - New Zealand, UK, ex Australia	20000503.0673
1999	
- ----	
Legionellosis - trade fair - Belgium: alert	19991114.2028

Legionellosis - prisoners - Germany (02)	19991017.1851
Legionellosis - prisoners - Germany	19990925.1705
Legionellosis - USA (Pennsylvania)	19990918.1675
Legionellosis - Australia (Victoria)	19990801.1310
Legionellosis - Australia	19990801.1309
Legionellosis - flower show - Netherlands (09)	19990404.0545
Legionellosis - flower show - Netherlands:RFI	19990315.0384
1998	
- ----	
Legionellosis - Australia (Melbourne)	19981031.2131
Legionellosis - Australia (Melbourne) (04)	19981224.2437
Legionellosis - Australia (Victoria)	19980714.1325
Legionellosis - Australia (Victoria) (03)	19980722.1388
Legionellosis, cruise ship - UK (Scotland)	19980629.1206
Legionellosis, lorry drivers - Europe	19980413.0677]
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