

LEGIONELLOSIS, HOTEL - SCANDINAVIA EX THAILAND (PHUKET):ALERT

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

[1]

Date: Thu, 11 Jan 2007

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Source: Helsingin Sanomat [edited]

<<http://www.hs.fi/english/article/Nordic+tourists+acquire+Legionnaires+disease+in+Thailand/1135224234107>>

The transfers of hundreds of Finnish tourists have begun from a hotel in Phuket to other accommodation, following an outbreak of Legionnaires' disease in the popular beach resort hotel.

Two Finns, a Norwegian, and 2 Swedish tourists have fallen ill with pneumonia caused by *Legionella* bacteria, after having stayed at the Phuket Grand Tropicana Hotel in Patong Beach, Phuket. All had been at the hotel in the period since 20 Nov 2006.

The National Public Health Institute has recommended the Finnish travel operator Aurinkomatkat should transfer all its clients from the hotel as soon as possible. The hotel must not be used until the water and air-conditioning systems have been cleaned and appropriate certifications on the completion of the measures have been received.

The National Public Health Institute is urging all persons who have been resident in the hotel since 20 Nov 2006 and have fallen ill with fever of more than 38 degrees C, either during the trip or within 14 days after leaving the hotel, to go to the doctor as soon as possible. However, if the symptoms have already disappeared, there is no need to seek medical care.

Pneumonia caused by the *Legionella* bacterium can be fatal for the elderly with heart and lung conditions, says epidemiologist Tran Minh Nhu Nguyen from the National Public Health Institute.

The Grand Tropicana has a constant quota of 125 rooms for Finnish travelers, and currently, more than 300 tourists are being accommodated at the hotel, reports Tom Selanniemi of Aurinkomatkat. Other accommodations have already been found for part of the guests, even though it is not an easy task with the Chinese New Year being celebrated soon.

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Source: Eurosurveillance [edited]

<<http://www.eurosurveillance.org/ew/2007/070111.asp#2>>

Four cases of Legionnaires' disease have recently been reported in a Norwegian, a Finn and 2 people from Sweden. These patients were all among guests staying at a hotel in Patong Beach, Phuket, Thailand since 20 Nov 2006. The patients became ill between 6-9 Dec and on 26 Dec 2006. Three cases are in men (aged 24-66) and one is in a woman (aged 51). None of the cases has been fatal.

The responsible national institutes have informed tour operators with whom patients traveled about the suspected link to the hotel. Some tour operators have stopped using the hotel for their guests temporarily, and all tour operators in Norway, Finland and Sweden who used the hotel are informing all guests who stayed at the hotel since 20 Nov 2006 by e-mail or post.

Reporting of the individual cases to the European Working Group for Legionella Infections (EWGLI) resulted in a cluster alert being issued on the 3 Jan 2006 within the EWGLI network, and to the International Federation of Tour Operators, World Health Organization and European Centre for Disease Control (ECDC). Following confirmation of the 4th case from Norway, an alert was issued to the Early Warning and Response System on the 9 Jan 2007.

The WHO and ECDC are co-ordinating follow-up of recent visitors to the hotel who may not have been contacted through tour operators. Information about the cluster and advice to returning travelers has been issued on the following national institute websites (National Public Health Institute Finland: <<http://www.ktl.fi>>, Norwegian Institute for Public Health: <<http://www.fhi.no>>, Swedish Institute for Infectious Disease Control: <<http://www.smittskyddsinstitutet.se>>).

Legionnaires' disease (or legionellosis) is a bacterial infection which presents usually as pneumonia, treatable with antibiotics. Person to person transmission of the infection has never been demonstrated. Incubation time is normally 2-10 days. Symptoms include fever, chills, headache and muscle pain followed by a dry cough and breathing difficulties associated with the pneumonia.

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[Phuket is located in southern Thailand on the Strait of Malacca and can be found on a map of the country at:

<<http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/thailand.pdf>>. The area was extensively affected by the tsunami on 26 Dec 2004. - Mod.LL]

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### Legionnaires' Disease Attacks Nordic Tourists

Four Nordic Tourists infected by Legionnaires' disease at the Grand Tropicana Hotel in Phuket.

By Rapeepat Jumnonjrit

So far two Finns, one Norwegian, and two Swede tourists aged 24 to 66 have fallen ill with pneumonia-like disease caused by Legionella bacteria after staying in the Grand Tropicana Hotel in Phuket. The first case was reported on November 20th 2006. Also, a Finnish traveler who was resident at the hotel about a year ago probably fell ill with the disease.

Due to the situation all Finnish guest at the Grand Tropicana Hotel in Phuket have been transferred to other accommodation. Tourists who have booked their trip to Phuket through the Finnish travel operator Aurinkomatkat may cancel their vacation or change their destination because all hotels in Phuket are filled to capacity.

So far Aurinkomatkat has found new accommodation for about 140 travelers of the 300 Finns who were staying at the hotel from the beginning of the week. Efforts are being made to find another hotel for the remaining residents, says Tuomo Meretniemi from Aurinkomatkat.

Legionnaire's disease does not necessarily cause any symptoms. However, for patients in poor health and elderly with heart and lung conditions, the disease can be fatal.

Aurinkomatkat has sent letters to around 1,500 clients who have been resident in the hotel since November 20th 2006 and have fallen ill with fever more than 38°C either during the trip or within 14 days after leaving the hotel to go to the doctor as soon as possible. However, if the symptoms have already disappeared, there is no need to seek medical care.

According to the National Public Health Institute, the Grand Tropicana Hotel must not be used until the water and air-conditioning systems have been cleaned and appropriate certifications on the completion of the measures have been received.

The Legionella bacteria is transmitted in water droplets, usually spread by the spray from water towers, and can grow in shower heads that sit with stagnant water. However the water samples from the hotel have not been processed yet.