

LEGIONELLOSIS, HOTEL - SWEDEN (DALARNA): SUSPECTED

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Possible Legionnaires' disease outbreak at Swedish luxury hotel

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About 50 guests at a luxury hotel and spa in central Sweden became ill over the weekend from what health authorities fear could be Legionnaires' disease.

"2 whirlpools and a swimming pool have been closed and we have taken water samples to see if the bacteria are there," Birgitta deJong, an epidemiologist at the Swedish Institute for Infectious Disease Control, SMI, said on Wed, 2 Feb 2005.

Legionnaires' disease -- 1st discovered at an American Legion convention in the United States in 1976, where 29 people died -- causes high fever, dry cough, lung congestion, and subsequent pneumonia. It is commonly spread through contaminated water sources, air conditioners, and ventilators and is treated with antimicrobial agents.

About 50 guests at the Dalecarlia hotel in the central Swedish region of Dalarna became sick over the weekend with what appeared to be Pontiac fever, a less severe form of Legionnaires' disease in which pneumonia does not develop.

According to media reports, the 2 whirlpools were thought to be the source of the bacteria.

"I think these people have come down with Pontiac fever or the flu. It's hard to say exactly since our contact person at the hotel is sick," deJong said, adding that she could not rule out that some of the guests might develop full-blown Legionnaires'.

"It's too early to say ... the incubation period for Legionnaires' is 10 days," she said, adding that some of the guests had chosen to take blood tests to see if they were developing antibodies to the disease.

"But we won't know until they take another blood test in 6 to 7 weeks. Meanwhile some of the people who got sick are already starting to get better. That's good news," deJong pointed out.

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[ProMED awaits more information regarding possible confirmation of legionellosis by diagnostic testing. It is just as likely that a respiratory virus was related to the cluster of cases. - Mod.LL]