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Legionnaires' disease confirmed at hotel

By: Erin Vannella

The Best Western Sovereign Hotel on Western Avenue tests positive for Legionella bacteria, and the Albany County Health Department announces six people have confirmed cases of the disease. Our Erin Vannella spoke to one woman who's no stranger to the disease.

ALBANY, N.Y. – “Legionnaires' disease is a bacterial pneumonia,” described Dr. David Rockwell, an Ellis Hospital Infectious Disease Specialist.

Infectious Disease Specialist, Doctor David Rockwell, describes the illness that Albany County Health Department officials say infected six people last month who may have been exposed to the bacteria at the Best Western Sovereign Hotel on Wolf Road.

“It is an organism that lives anywhere there is free standing water, so you can culture it from ponds, lakes, streams, shower heads, sink taps, air conditioning, cause they have the potential perhaps to involve large numbers of people,” said Rockwell.

Water samples at the hotel have tested positive and while Best Western International said it's working to eliminate the bacteria, another victim from a different hotel has come forward.

Lori Clark, a Legionnaires' victim said, “It has changed the way that I view life. It's one day at a time. I take it one day at a time and am just glad to be alive that day.”

Lori Clark said she was diagnosed in January 2011 after attending a conference at the Comfort Inn in Schodack. The Comfort Inn tested positive for the bacteria too, and Clark is suing.

Attorney, Michael Conway said, “No one warned her about this, uh her doctor also testified in the workers compensation proceeding in his belief she contracted it there. She was in a coma for 43 days, she was in the hospital for several months.”

But Clark said she continues to move forward to recover and seek damages.

“I know that I'll deal with my respiratory situation for the rest of my life and it'll be a struggle every day to breath and do physical activity,” said Clark.

The Albany County Health Department encourages anyone with symptoms who stayed at the Best Western on Western after January 9th to seek medical attention and call the number on your screen.

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