

LEGIONELLOSIS - CANADA: (ONTARIO) INCREASED INCIDENCE

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

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

[1]

Date: Wed 19 Oct 2011

Source: Thestar.com[edited]

<<http://www.thestar.com/news/article/1072716>>

The number of cases of Legionnaires' disease reported in Ontario is higher than usual this year [2011], prompting public health units across the province to increase surveillance for the disease.

Dr. Arlene King, Ontario's chief medical officer of health, said 116 cases of Legionnaires' disease have already been reported in 2011.

Last year, the province saw a total of 116 cases.

"The number of detections . . . since 2006 has gone up slightly every year," King said. There were 69 cases in 2006.

Public health experts are not sure why Ontario is more cases. King suspects that this year's long, hot summer may be a factor because warm water temperatures can contribute to the growth of Legionella pneumophila, the bacterium which causes the disease.

Legionnaires' disease, which is treatable with antibiotics, is spread through aerosolized water or with contact with soil, and not person-to-person. King said man-made water supplies, everything from hot tubs to shower heads to air cooling towers, can be sources of Legionella bacteria.

In 2005, an outbreak of Legionnaires' disease in a Scarborough nursing home killed more than 20 people. After launching an investigation, public health officials found Legionella bacteria in the air cooling tower atop the residence. They said the bacteria were spread throughout the home via the ventilation system.

King said 15 health units have reported cases of Legionnaires' disease to the province. Health officials have analyzed each reported case to see if there is a common source of bacteria.

"There have been isolated cases throughout the province," King said.

"There is no evidence there is any common source related to the increases we have seen in the months of August through October."

In Ontario, 56 people have been hospitalized and 4 people have died due to Legionnaires' disease. King said most cases are of people over the age of 50 and many have a history of smoking or have other underlying medical conditions.

Toronto Public Health has seen 33 cases since 1 Aug 2011, all of which were hospitalized. There has been one death due to Legionnaires' disease in Toronto.

Ontario's public health units have notified local family doctors and emergency room physicians to be on the watch for signs and symptoms of Legionnaires' disease in their patients.

[Byline: Megan Ogilvie]

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ProMED-mail

[2]

Date: Tue 25 Oct 2011

Source: The Epoch Times [edited]

<<http://www.theepochtimes.com/n2/canada/ontario-sees-more-cases-of-legionnaires-disease-this-year-63349.html>>

There have been a higher-than-normal number of cases of Legionnaires' disease in Ontario this year [2011], and health officials aren't sure why.

The province has already seen 116 cases of the acute lung infection reported this year, compared to a total of 116 in 2010 and 69 in 2006, according to David Jansen, a spokesperson with the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

Legionnaires' disease, which could be fatal in some cases, is spread through aerosolized water and soil, and not person-to-person contact.

The severity of the disease varies. Its common symptoms are coughing, malaise, and fever.

In Ontario, an estimated 7574 episodes are attributable to the bacterium causing the disease called *Legionella pneumophila* each year.

Jansen said in an e-mail that health officials are not sure why the number of reported cases has gone up this year, "since there has been no common cause behind the cases in 2011."

However, he notes that the high temperatures this past summer might have contributed to the rise in cases. "This year's long, hot summer may be a factor because warm water temperatures can contribute to the growth of *Legionella pneumophila*," he said. Jensen recommends "proper maintenance of all mist-producing devices such as shower heads, hot tubs, whirlpools, and humidifiers" to prevent the spread of the bacteria.

[Byline Julie Valdez]

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Communicated by:

ProMED-mail from HealthMap alerts

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[Legionnaires' disease is rarely confirmed with laboratory testing because most cases of pneumonia are treated empirically without identifying the causative pathogen. Therefore, analyzing only reported cases of Legionnaires' disease would severely underestimate the burden of this disease. Therefore, using an attributable fraction from various epidemiologic studies in the literature, the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion and the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences estimated that each year an average of 7574 episodes of pneumonia in the province could be attributed to *Legionella* (<http://www.ices.on.ca/file/ONBOIDS_FullReport_intra.pdf>).

Legionellosis is an infectious disease caused by a Gram-negative bacillus of the genus *Legionella*, most commonly *Legionella pneumophila*. Legionnaires' disease is the acute pneumonic form of the disease. Pontiac fever is a non-pneumonic form of legionellosis that is less severe than Legionnaires' disease. Legionellosis is generally acquired by inhalation of an infectious dose of aerosolized *Legionella*. Water temperatures of 25-40 deg C (77-104 deg F) support the highest concentrations of the organism in water

storage tanks of plumbing systems. Aerosolization of the contaminated warm water can occur in showers, spa pools, sprays in groceries, fountains, cooling towers, and car washes.

For a discussion of legionellosis, see ProMED-mail post Legionellosis Spain (05): Madrid 20101115.4142.

A map of Ontario showing the location of Toronto can be accessed at: <http://www.canada-maps.org/ontario-map.htm>. The HealthMap/ProMED-mail interactive map of Canada is available at: <http://healthmap.org/r/007x>. - Mod.ML]

[see also:
2005

Legionellosis - Canada (ON) (02): long-term care 20051022.3091 Legionellosis - Canada (ON): long-term care 20051007.2926 Undiagnosed respiratory deaths - Canada (ON)(03): legionellosis conf. 20051006.2917

Undiagnosed respiratory deaths - Canada (ON)(02) 20051005.2908 Undiagnosed respiratory deaths - Canada (ON): RFI 20051003.2889]sb/ml/ejp/dk