

BBC NEWS**WALES**

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Conservative AM calls for 'more info' on outbreak

People in the Heads of the Valleys area of south Wales have not had enough information on the fatal outbreak of Legionnaires' disease, says a Tory AM.

Andrew RT Davies said people needed a more exact idea of the geographical area concerned.

"There should be a flow of information to try and get an idea of the footprint of the outbreak... so people can have piece of mind," he said.

Public Health Wales said it owed a duty of confidentiality to those affected.

The shadow health minister told BBC Radio Wales that good quality information acted as a comfort blanket to the people living in the outbreak area.

"I would like to see, if it was appropriate, where the footprint of the disease is, rather than the wider geographical area of the Heads of the Valleys road," said Mr Davies.

Mr Davies acknowledged that the incident control team handling the outbreak was having to strike a balance between the information it received and the need not to cause undue concern.

"I accept they are in a difficult position," he said.

"But actually on the ground there doesn't seem to be a great deal of information arriving on people's doorsteps."

The incident control team clearly knew the areas where the people who have been confirmed

with the disease live, said the AM.

"We do know that the first case was in the Pontypridd area - that information was released, so it does show that there is an ability to release certain bits of information," he said.

"We are not looking at pinpointing addresses, but there's no harm in identifying the towns, for example, or maybe even the hospitals that are dealing with this.

"Are there designated hospitals that are dealing with this, or is it just the general hospital within that particular area in which that particular individual lives?"

Public Health Wales said it was aware that some people were avoiding the Heads of the Valleys area but stressed there was no need to do this as the disease cannot be spread from person to person.

'Normal business'

It said that giving out details of where those infected live, or have been treated, would only compromise their confidentiality without helping the public.

Finding the source remained the top priority, the organisation said.

Merthyr Tydfil GP Jonathan Richards said doctors have been receiving emails every day from Public Health Wales giving the latest information.

The assembly government was also making information available online.

"I think they're telling us as much as they are able to," said Dr Richards.

He said he felt sorry for the public health teams because there were many potential sources of infection and all needed to be investigated.

He added: "It would be nice... to know which bit of the Heads of the Valley they think it might be... but I don't think they can say that.

"They can't say what they don't yet know and I think some people may have unrealistic expectations."

Tower closures

He spoke after part of a third industrial cooling tower had been shut as a precaution as

inquiries continue into the source of the outbreak.

Health officials said part of the tower at a Rhymney valley company was closed before cleaning.

This followed the separate closure of two other towers before they were disinfected.

None of the premises is confirmed as the outbreak's source.

Two people - a 70-year-old man and a woman aged 64 - have died in cases possibly linked to the outbreak.

Public health experts expect the number of cases to continue to rise and have not ruled out further deaths.

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