

Health Advisory:

Recognition and Reporting of Disease Outbreaks or Unusual Illnesses

October 25, 2013

This document will be updated as new information becomes available. The current version can always be viewed at <http://www.health.mo.gov>

The Missouri Department of Health & Senior Services (DHSS) is now using 4 types of documents to provide important information to medical and public health professionals, and to other interested persons:

Health Alerts convey information of the highest level of importance which warrants immediate action or attention from Missouri health providers, emergency responders, public health agencies, and/or the public.

Health Advisories provide important information for a specific incident or situation, including that impacting neighboring states; may not require immediate action.

Health Guidances contain comprehensive information pertaining to a particular disease or condition, and include recommendations, guidelines, etc. endorsed by DHSS.

Health Updates provide new or updated information on an incident or situation; can also provide information to update a previously sent Health Alert, Health Advisory, or Health Guidance; unlikely to require immediate action.

Health Advisory
October 25, 2013

FROM: GAIL VASTERLING
ACTING DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Recognition and Reporting of Disease Outbreaks or Unusual Illnesses

From October 25th through October 29th, very large numbers of persons will be coming to the St. Louis area for a number of sporting events including the World Series. This Health Advisory is intended to remind medical providers and facilities of the need to be alert for any indications of disease outbreaks or unusual diseases or manifestations of illness, and if identified, to report immediately all known or suspected cases to public health authorities. It also will contain information on resources that can assist providers and facilities in this effort, and in the diagnosis and medical management of individuals who may be affected.

Medical providers and facilities are required to report known or suspected cases of certain diseases and conditions to their local public health agency (LPHA), or to the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS). A list of these diseases and conditions, and the time frames for reporting, are found at: <http://health.mo.gov/living/healthcondiseases/communicable/communicabledisease/pdf/reportablediseaselist2.pdf>. Note particularly the requirement for the immediate reporting to public health officials of single cases or outbreaks of unusual diseases or manifestations of illness, including those which might be the result of a terrorist or other intentional act involving biological, chemical, radiological, or physical agents. Reports to DHSS can be made by calling 573/751-6113, or 800/392-0272 (24/7).

LPHAs and DHSS' Bureau of Communicable Disease Control and Prevention (BCDCP) can provide epidemiology and surveillance assistance in situations involving outbreaks, or individual cases, of unusual illnesses (as well as outbreaks of commonly occurring diseases). Public health laboratory services are available through the Missouri State Public Health Laboratory (MSPHL). Public health officials can also provide guidance for managing outbreaks or cases of unusual disease. BCDCP can be contacted at 573/751-6113, and MSPHL can be contacted at 573-751-3334. Both can also be reached at 800/392-0272 (24/7).

One concern in a major event involving large numbers of casualties is that available medical resources may become quickly depleted. The Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) contains substantial quantities of medications and medical equipment that can be made available to medical providers and facilities if local supplies are exhausted. In addition, Show-Me Response (Missouri's Emergency System for Advanced Registration for Volunteer Health Professionals) is a system which allows preregistration of medical and non-medical professionals who can be available to serve as volunteers in the event of a major disaster or public health emergency (see <http://health.mo.gov/emergencies/ert/volunteer.php>).

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High-impact terrorist attacks can occur in the United States. Medical providers play a crucial role in the treatment of victims of these attacks, and in some instances in the initial recognition that an attack has occurred (e.g., by identifying the initial anthrax cases in 2001).

Resources are available which provide clinical information and guidance for those who care for persons impacted by terrorist events. Links to these resources are available from the following DHSS websites:

- a. Biological agents: <http://health.mo.gov/emergencies/ert/biomed.php>.

As mentioned above, DHSS' communicable disease bureau (BCDCP) can be contacted at 573/751-6113

- b. Chemical agents: <http://health.mo.gov/emergencies/ert/chemmed.php>

For emergency clinical consultation regarding the management of chemical agent victims, contact the Missouri Poison Center at 314-772-5200 (in St. Louis) or 800-222-1222 (outside St. Louis).

- c. Radiological agents: <http://health.mo.gov/emergencies/ert/nucmed.php>

DHSS recently released a Health Guidance document entitled "Management in a Hospital Setting of Persons Contaminated With Radioactive Material and Exposed to Radiation Following a Dirty Bomb Explosion – 2013." It is available at:

<http://health.mo.gov/emergencies/ert/alertsadvories/pdf/hg10213.pdf>

Expert medical consultation on the management of victims of radiation events is available 24/7 from the Radiation Emergency Assistance Center/Training Site (REAC/TS), a radiation emergency medical response asset of the U.S. Department of Energy/National Nuclear Security Administration. Their emergency number is 865/576-1005. Other questions on radiological issues can be directed to DHSS' Bureau of Environmental Epidemiology at 573/751-6102.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has provided links to guidance for responding to bombings and other mass casualty events. It is found at <http://emergency.cdc.gov/HAN/han00346.asp>.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that while attention is currently being given to the events in St. Louis this coming weekend, medical providers and facilities should always be alert to evidence of disease outbreaks or unusual illnesses, and immediately report all known or suspected cases to public health officials. Providers and facilities should also remain aware of the assistance and resources that public health agencies can provide.