



SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY *Messenger* Public Health Laboratory

September 2012

Influenza virus H1N2v variant discovered in Minnesota.

The director of the Minnesota Public Health Laboratory, Joanne Bartkus, notified the public health laboratory community on September 4 of the identification of a new influenza virus variant, H1N2v that has infected three people. Like the H3N2 variant, which has recently infected nearly three hundred people in 11 states, this new variant is associated with contact with swine; either exhibiting pigs or spending time in a swine barn at the Minnesota state fair. Two pigs at the swine exhibit were found to be infected with this new variant virus.

Additional surveillance is necessary to determine if this new variant behaves like the H3N2 variant; i.e., limited person-to-person spread and lack of sustained community spread. Although only three cases of H1N2 variant illness have occurred, all have recovered; perhaps indicating illness is similar in severity to H3N2v illness. H3N2v illness has been mild with symptoms similar to seasonal flu, and most cases have occurred in children who have little immunity against this virus. Like seasonal flu, however, serious illness is possible. People at high risk of serious complications from H3N2v include children younger than 5, people with certain chronic conditions like asthma, diabetes or heart disease, weakened immune systems, pregnant women and people 65 years and older. These people are urged to avoid pigs and pig arenas at fairs this season. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is working with states to respond to these outbreaks and continues to monitor the situation closely. The San Luis Obispo Public Health Laboratory performs the CDC Reverse Transcription PCR assay and is capable of detecting these variants.

Sexually transmitted infections: Gonorrhea and syphilis

Reports of gonorrhea (GC) cases in SLO County have increased and the Public Health Laboratory positivity rate has doubled in recent weeks compared to the first six months of 2012. The rise in GC is coincident with an increase in both GC treatment-resistance and the number of syphilis cases. In response to the rise in the level of resistance, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention published new guidance for treatment (MMWR, August 10, 2012). The CDC now recommends a two drug regimen to prevent treatment failures.

The San Luis Obispo Public Health Laboratory will accept without charge specimens for *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* culture from individuals suspected to have failed antibiotic therapy. It is important to recognize that amplification testing is not recommended to assess drug treatment failure because amplification cannot distinguish between live and dead organisms, is often positive for days or weeks after successful treatment and cannot be used to determine antibiotic resistance.

Instructions for collection of specimens suitable for *N.gonorrhoeae* culture can be found on the SLO Public Health Laboratory website <http://www.slopublichealth.org/lab>.