



SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY *Messenger* Public Health Laboratory

March 2013

Novel Coronavirus (NCoV) infections

As reported by ProMed Digest on March 12, 15 confirmed cases of novel coronavirus infection with 9 deaths have been reported. WHO announced that it has been informed by the United Kingdom about another confirmed case of NCoV (novel coronavirus) infection in that country. This third case in the UK over the last week forms part of the same family cluster as the other two (at the time of this announcement). The most recent UK case had not travelled abroad, indicating probable human-to-human transmission, although sustained human-to-human transmission has not been identified. The death rate in confirmed cases is much higher than that observed for the SARS coronavirus. At present it is unknown if an animal may be the reservoir for infection as was shown to be the case for SARS. WHO recommends continued surveillance for severe acute respiratory infections (SARI) and careful review of any unusual patterns. Testing for the new coronavirus should be considered in patients with unexplained pneumonias, or in patients with unexplained severe, progressive or complicated respiratory illness not responding to treatment, and investigation of any cases of SARI in healthcare workers or clusters of SARI. Health authorities have been asked by WHO to report cases as NCoV or the **Novel Coronavirus**, and not as *SARS-like* to avoid confusion.

Antibiotic-Resistant *Shigella sonnei*

In May 2012, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health investigated an outbreak of shigellosis associated with a private bridge club. This investigation documented the first known transmission of *Shigella sonnei* with decreased susceptibility to azithromycin in the USA. Isolates displayed resistance to streptomycin, sulfisoxazole, tetracycline, and trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole, elevated azithromycin minimum inhibitory concentrations (MICs) of greater than 16 $\mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$ and harbored a plasmid-encoded macrolide resistance gene. (MMWR March 8, 2013, Vol 62, no 9.)

Possible *Listeria* contamination of Blood Agar Culture Plates

On Friday March 1, 2013, CDPH was notified by the U. S. Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention (CDC) about possible *Listeria* contamination of sheep blood agar plates, which are commonly used by laboratories to culture bacteria. The U. S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is working with manufacturers to confirm contamination and identify the source. Fifteen of the sixteen clinical specimens have been unusual for listeriosis, including urine, gastric isolate, and abscess, and the patients who submitted these fifteen specimens reportedly had no symptoms typical of listeriosis. Several hospital laboratories noted that unused plates had visible growth. At this time, the possible contamination has not been linked to one supplier or to a specific lot of plates; however, all the isolates have come from plates that included sheep blood in the media.

SLO Public Health Laboratory website <http://www.slopublichealth.org/lab>.