



SLO Public Health Laboratory Bulletin

May 2010

HEALTH PROVIDER ADVISORY: Assisting Relief Workers and Others Traveling to Haiti

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has received reports of malaria, dengue fever and tuberculosis (TB) among relief workers returning from Haiti, where the diseases are endemic. Please visit the CDC website for the complete guidance: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/content/news-announcements/healthcare-providers-haiti-earthquake-response.aspx>.

Laboratories should be cognizant that returning workers may require laboratory testing that is uncommonly requested. Recently the SLO Public Health Laboratory provided assistance to a local hospital who diagnosed malaria a returning aid worker. The parasite was identified as *Plasmodium falciparum* by the state laboratory. The San Luis Obispo County Public Health Department is advising local health care providers of an increased risk of insect-borne and infectious diseases for patients traveling to or returning from Haiti, such as relief workers for earthquake response.

Malaria is always a serious disease and may be a deadly illness. Remind patients that if they become ill with a fever or flu-like illness either while in Haiti or after they return home, they should seek immediate medical attention and should tell physicians that they have recently been in Haiti. Most cases will present in the first month, but some cases, especially in persons with partial immunity, may present later.

Dengue illness can range from a mild fever to classic dengue fever, to the severe forms of the disease,--dengue hemorrhagic fever and dengue shock syndrome. Signs and symptoms dengue fever are high fever, chills, headache and muscle pain. Additionally, a faint rash on the trunk and upper arms may appear on the second to third day of illness. No vaccine or medications are available to prevent or treat dengue. Treatment is supportive with fever-reducing medicines and fluids. The CDC encourages health care providers to submit samples to state health departments or the CDC for proper laboratory testing. Clinical guidance for dengue is available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/dengue/clinicalLab/clinical.html>.

Tuberculosis rates are very high in Haiti, and multidrug-resistant TB and TB/HIV co-infection are also public health concerns in Haiti. If your patient anticipates giving medical care to or working closely with ill or injured victims or other displaced persons in Haiti, a tuberculin skin test is recommended before travel and then 8–10 weeks after return. Regardless of tuberculin skin test results, any person who develops symptoms of TB during or after deployment should seek a medical evaluation immediately. A personal respiratory protective device (e.g., N-95 respirator) should always be worn when in contact with any person suspected of having or known to have TB.

Resurgence of pertussis, California 2010

Dr Mark Horton of the California Department of Public Health issued an advisory on April 23, citing a recent rise in illness due to pertussis, commonly known as whooping cough. "Pertussis is highly contagious", Horton said. "Unimmunized or incompletely immunized young infants are particularly vulnerable. Illness in the age group frequently leads to hospitalization and can be fatal." Almost twice as many cases have been reported in first quarter of 2010 than a similar period in 2009, with a report of two fatal infant cases.

The SLO Public Health Laboratory has confirmed cases, and is accepting nasopharyngeal wash and swab specimens for *Bordetella pertussis* PCR testing. PCR is superior to culture for detection of the agent of whooping cough. Culture has a reported sensitivity of 45-60% in most published studies whereas PCR is reported 90-95% sensitive. The assay used by the SLO Public Health Laboratory will also detect *B. paraptussis*. Fee is ~~\$280~~ \$92.00 through June 30, 2010, all insurances can be billed by the SLO Public Health Laboratory.

Quantiferon Blood Collection Kits

Watch for the expiration dates on blood collection (three-tube kits red, purple and grey : Lot number L020901 Expiration 05/2010) .