

Bulletin No. 4  
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Kotzebue Infectious Hepatitis Epidemic

Since August over 200 cases of infectious hepatitis have been diagnosed in Barrow and the Kotzebue Sound area. Over 95 percent of cases are children under 17 years of age, and clinical illness is generally mild and less than 14 days in duration. Alaska physicians should seriously consider infectious hepatitis in the differential diagnosis of any child who presents with headache, lassitude, abdominal pain, and anorexia, especially when a history of contact with someone in the epidemic area is elicited. If standard serologic liver function tests are not available, the diagnosis can usually be made or excluded by examining a urine sample for bilirubin.

**Ampicillin Resistant H. Influenza**

While strains of ampicillin resistant H. influenza have appeared in many areas of the country, no resistant isolate has been reported from Alaska. Standard ampicillin disc sensitivity testing is notoriously inaccurate due to numerous false positives. Sensitivity testing by tube dilution should be performed on all isolates from life-threatening H. influenza infections not responding to parenteral ampicillin within 24 hours and on all isolates read as resistant by standard disc sensitivity techniques. This tube dilution testing is offered as a free service to physicians by the Center for Disease Control.

For further information, contact the Regional State Laboratory, Regional Health Officer or Dr. Michael Moser (CDC, Alaska Activities, Anchorage, 279-9511.)

Serious infections such as meningitis or sepsis should continue to be initially treated with parenteral ampicillin; the regimen should be changed to chloramphenicol if no clinical improvement is seen within 24 to 36 hours.

**Penicillin Resistant Staph**

Research at USPHS hospitals in Anchorage and Bethel shows that 90 to 98 percent of coagulase (+) staph isolated from all sources is penicillin resistant. During April through September 1974 when 90.9 percent of total isolates were resistant, 134 cultures from in-patients were 94.8 percent resistant and those from out-patients were 88.1 percent resistant. Penicillin is therefore not a drug of choice for outpatients suspected of having a coagulase (+) staph infection.

**Influenza**

To date, there have been no confirmed viral isolates of influenza. Reports of influenza-like disease have been reported from Palmer, Valdez and Prudhoe Bay in the past two weeks.