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Whooping Cough Returns to Strike Alaskans

After two and a half years without a case of pertussis, four cases were confirmed in August. The first case occurred in a 23-month-old boy who became ill on July 27 in Juneau. The child had received only two DTP immunizations. The second case occurred two weeks later in a four-week-old female child also in Juneau. The third case was reported from Wrangell in a 16-month-old girl who had received three DTP immunizations; the last case occurred on September 1 in a four-month-old girl who was diagnosed in Juneau. The last child had two DTP immunizations and had just arrived from Fairbanks.

All patients were treated with Erythromycin for seven days. In addition, DTP immunizations were updated when appropriate for age and interval since last vaccination. All family contacts of the cases were given Erythromycin for seven days. DTP vaccination was given to children who were not fully updated on their DTP immunizations. We were not able to discover the source of these cases nor identify the chain of transmission.

Nationwide, there is a notable increase in pertussis cases. Undoubtedly, more cases of pertussis will occur here in Alaska. Our school immunization program has been very successful in updating the immunizations of school age children. All public health workers should now concentrate on updating the immunizations of preschoolers, especially against pertussis.

Kits are available from the State Health Department Laboratory in Anchorage to allow for the rapid diagnosis of pertussis by the fluorescent antibody technique. Requests can be made by phoning 274-1602. If at all possible, nasal-pharyngeal specimens should be obtained prior to the administration of antibiotics. Epidemiologic assistance and consultation can be obtained by the Medical Epidemiologist at 272-7534.

Multiple Antibiotic Resistant Pneumococci - South Africa

Since May, 1977, *Streptococcus pneumoniae* organisms have been isolated from patients in South Africa which are resistant to penicillin, ampicillin, cephalothin, methicillin, erythromycin, clindamycin, tetracycline, chloramphenicol, and the aminoglycosides. The organism was sensitive only to rifampin, vancomycin and bacitracin. Epidemiologic investigations are being extended to the general population and to other hospitals in South Africa. So far multiple antibiotic resistant organisms have been recognized only in South Africa. This is the first time that multiple antibiotic resistance has been documented in this organism, although a type 14 pneumococcus, resistant to penicillin, has been recently recovered from Minnesota. The emergence of antibiotic resistance in this organism has considerable public health impact for the future!

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