

State of Alaska
Epidemiology



Bulletin

Copies of any bulletin may be ordered by calling the Section of Epidemiology at (907) 269-8000
or by writing to us at PO Box 240249, Anchorage, Alaska 99524-0249

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Bulletin No. 20
November 20, 1981

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Rabies antibody testing began when Duck Embryo Vaccine (DEV) was licensed. Duck Embryo Vaccine was virtually free of serious side reactions. However, its potency was marginal and 20% or more of those vaccinated failed to develop antibodies after pre-exposure vaccination (3 doses of vaccine) or even after post-exposure treatment (23 doses of vaccine plus human rabies globulin). Because of the high failure rate with Duck Embryo Vaccine (DEV), it was necessary to examine antibody response in all those vaccinated.

Human Diploid Cell Rabies Vaccine (HDCV) has totally replaced Duck Embryo Vaccine (DEV) as the choice for all rabies vaccinations. HDCV appears to be potent and the safest vaccine to date. Three doses are recommended for pre-exposure vaccination (days 0, 7, and 28). Five doses are given for post-exposure vaccination (days 0, 3, 7, 14, and 28) along with Human Rabies Immune Globulin (HRIG) (given on day 0 only). The serologic responses to these regimens have been evaluated by the Centers for Disease Control during the past year. Of those vaccinated, virtually all persons developed adequate levels of antibody after administration of the recommended regimens of Human Diploid Cell Vaccine. (1299/1300 given post-exposure treatment, (99.9%) and all 510 given pre-exposure vaccination).

Because of the excellent response to HDCV, testing of serum for neutralizing antibody to rabies is no longer necessary. In extraordinary circumstances, arrangements can be made for rabies antibody testing after individual consultation and critical evaluation.

Human Rabies Immune Globulin (HRIG) and Human Diploid Cell Rabies (HDCV) are available through the Rabies Control Program, Section of Communicable Disease Control in Anchorage (272-7534) or through the Virology-Rabies Unit, Section of Laboratories in Fairbanks (479-7017). The Division of Public Health supplies these vaccines free of charge for pre-exposure vaccination as well as for post-exposure vaccination after consultation when circumstances dictate their use.

INFLUENZA SURVEILLANCE

We would like to encourage all physicians and other health care providers to keep a sharp lookout for patients with illnesses compatible with influenza. We encourage the early and prompt reporting of any suspected influenza outbreaks. In past years the Section of Communicable Disease Control has conducted extensive statewide influenza surveillance programs. Analysis of these programs has indicated that the most sensitive indicator of the presence of influenza in the State of Alaska is the reporting of outbreaks of upper respiratory illness in children or adults.

The early and accurate reporting of influenza outbreaks by private physicians has enabled us to obtain viral culture specimens to document which influenza strains are causing illness in the community. Arrangements for obtaining viral cultures (which are available free of charge) can be made by contacting Don Ritter, Virology-Rabies Laboratory Unit, Northern Regional Laboratory, 479-7017, or by contacting Dr. Charles Ryan or Dr. John Middaugh, Section of Communicable Disease Control, Anchorage 272-7534.