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Pertussis Alert - Immunize Your Child

Three cases of pertussis (whooping cough) have been documented in the village of Kotlik since October 31, 1986. The index case, a three month old infant, was up-to-date with one DPT at the time of her illness. This infant was hospitalized in Bethel with a history of persistent cough starting October 23, 1986. An FA slide was positive for *B. pertussis* at the State Lab on October 31, 1986.

The public health nurse immediately visited the village and began looking for other cases. Children with history of persistent cough were examined and nasopharyngeal swabs were obtained. In addition, several acutely ill individuals were cultured for pertussis. Immunization status of all children in the community was evaluated and all village children were immediately brought up-to-date with immunizations.

Of 53 children tested by FA antibody slide, 2 additional cases of pertussis were found. The second case, a 17-month-old child, had history of three DPT shots. This child reported only a mild periodic cough. The third case occurred in an 11-year-old child who also was up-to-date with her immunizations. This child also reported only a mild cough.

The original case became ill on 10/23/86. However, pertussis was not diagnosed until 11/6/86. This child reported close contact with seven children in the community one to five years old. One of these, a four-year-old, was unvaccinated. This child was placed on Erythromycin prophylaxis. Because of the delay in identification of this case, we did not recommend prophylaxis for other household and close contacts of this original case. Prophylaxis was recommended for family contacts of the two additional cases identified during the follow-up visit to the village.

Once in the community pertussis is very difficult to control. Pertussis is highly communicable and can be fatal to children less than six months of age. Completion of the primary series of DPT vaccine early in life is essential to protect against this disease. Vaccination of susceptible individuals to age seven is the most effective way to stop the transmission of pertussis.

We recommend that:

1. All health care providers survey their records and immediately immunize children who are not currently up-to-date.