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No Shots - No School.....Let's Protect Our Children

The big news of the week is a progress report on the statewide school immunization program. The Communicable Disease Control Division is working closely with the Department of Education, Department of Health and Social Services, and all local school districts to help plan and coordinate the statewide immunization program. Immunization record reviews are being done on all children attending schools in Alaska. All children who need immunizations against tetanus, diphtheria, polio, measles and rubella are being identified and special immunization efforts are underway. On March 1, 1977 any children who are not fully immunized in compliance with Alaska's statute and regulations will be excluded from school.

Fairbanks Strikes Back

On January 24, all children in the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District who were not fully immunized against measles were excluded from school. On Monday morning, January 24, some 1350 students who were not fully immunized were not allowed to attend classes. By Friday, January 28, there was not one child in attendance in a Fairbanks school who was not immunized and protected against measles. We expect this action to stop the measles epidemic in its tracks. We applaud the Fairbanks North Star Borough School district officials and their school nurses, the nurses in the Fairbanks Health Center, and all others who contributed so much to this prompt and effective action to stop the epidemic.

Influenza

So far, there is no evidence of any influenza activity in the State of Alaska. There have been outbreaks of Influenza B in several states outside. Influenza B has not been discovered in Alaska.

Botulism - Akiachak

On December 31, 1976, an outbreak of suspected botulism was investigated in the village of Akiachak. Several days following ingestion of home-cured salted raw salmon, a 54-year-old Native man experienced symptoms of vomiting, dry mouth, diplopia, urinary retention, and constipation. Over a four-day period in the hospital, marked muscle weakness and respiratory distress developed and a tracheotomy with mechanical ventilatory support was required January 1, 1977. A 30-year-old pregnant woman who also ate the salted fish was hospitalized with dysphagia, dry mouth, dysphonia, and upper extremity weakness, but mechanical ventilatory support was not required.

Type B botulism toxin was isolated from a sample of salt salmon and the serum of the first patient. Both patients were treated with trivalent botulism antitoxin and are recovering uneventfully. Another man who ate the incriminated fish suffered no symptoms and was negative for clinical signs of botulism.

Botulism is not a rare disease in Alaskan Natives. The diagnosis of botulism should be considered in every patient who complains of dry throat, dysphasia, dysphonia, diplopia, or bilateral acute muscle weakness, especially, if there is a history of recent consumption of dried or fermented traditionally prepared native foods. Suspected cases should be admitted immediately to the hospital for treatment and observation and the State Epidemiologist notified (272-7534). Trivalent botulism antitoxin is available from IHS hospital pharmacies or CDC in Anchorage (279-9511).

(Reported by Dr. Michael Moser, CDC, Alaskan Activities, Anchorage)