



Clín Occup Environ Med
2 (2002) xi–xii

Clinics in
OCCUPATIONAL and
ENVIRONMENTAL
MEDICINE

Preface

Occupational infectious diseases



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Guest Editors

Occupational infectious diseases are defined as those that are contracted through employment. They remain an important cause of morbidity and even occasional mortality in workers. A very broad range of diseases can be transmitted in the occupational setting. Some are easily recognized as being associated with occupation, such as zoonoses in animal handlers or transmission of blood-borne pathogens in health care workers after needlestick injuries. Others are not so easily recognized as occupationally related because they occur in both workers and the general population, and surveillance data documenting increased incidence rates in workers are lacking. Diarrheal diseases, scabies, and perhaps upper respiratory tract infections fall into this category.

The challenges of occupational infectious disease change in concert with changing disease patterns in the general population. The HIV pandemic and associated outbreaks of tuberculosis have profoundly affected health and safety precautions in the health care industry. Emerging vector-borne diseases such as Lyme disease and West Nile Virus infection have been a concern for outdoor workers. Concerns about bioterrorism apply not only to first responders and other health care workers but to other potentially exposed workers, such as postal workers.

Although occupational infectious diseases are a real and ever-changing threat, opportunities often exist for disease prevention. Administrative controls, engineering controls, protective equipment, vaccination, surveillance, medical screening, contact investigations with aggressive treatment of acute infection, and education all have importance in specific settings. Awareness of the potential threat posed by specific agents and effective deployment of preventive

modalities can have an important impact on the occurrence of infectious diseases in the workplace.

As Guest Editors of this issue of the *Clinics in Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, we have attempted to address some of the most important contemporary issues facing individuals with occupational infectious diseases. It is our hope that this issue, as well as the previous issue, "Terrorism: Biological, Chemical, and Nuclear", will be of help to those working in this important field.

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Clinics in
**OCCUPATIONAL *and*
ENVIRONMENTAL
MEDICINE**

Occupational Infectious Diseases

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GUEST EDITORS

AUGUST
2002

JAN-06-03 18:01 From:

T-308 P.02 Job-428

Appendix 2

Publication/Presentation Clearance (Electronic Form)

Date Required: 01/10/03
Date Submitted: 01/06/03
Accession No.: NIOSH-03-0081

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Weissman DN

Author(s) (Initial to show approval; If authors are from other centers/institute/offices (C/O's), include their affiliation.)

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Title: Occupational Infectious Disease: Part 1. Protein and Part 2. Introduction-Occupational Infectious Disease Still A Challenge

[X] FOR PUBLICATION

[X] Article, Letter in Journal (Name of Journal) Clinics in Occupational and Environmental Medicine
[] CDC publication [] Manual [] Pamphlet [] Report [] Other (Specify)

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[X] FOR CROSS-CLEARANCE

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