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Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) Update

Suspected cases of SARS reported in U.S.

CDC has reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) 11 suspected cases of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). The cases, reported by clinicians from 10 states, meet the case definition established by the WHO. CDC continues to work with state health officials and clinicians to evaluate these cases.

Note: Case numbers may fluctuate as the investigation proceeds and more knowledge is gained. CDC will update case counts regularly on its web site in order to be consistent with its reporting to the WHO.

Laboratory findings of a paramyxovirus

Findings in Germany and Hong Kong suggesting that a paramyxovirus may be playing a role in the SARS outbreak appear promising. CDC laboratorians advise caution, however, in altering treatment modalities based on this information. Samples used in these tests were obtained from the naso-pharynx, and tissue sample testing has not yet been completed. CDC advises clinicians not to assume they are treating SARS or a paramyxovirus infection, but rather to evaluate patients with an open mind and treat them with the appropriate antimicrobial therapy that they would use for any case of serious community acquired atypical pneumonia until additional information is available to help guide them.

Quarantine safety net expands

CDC quarantine officers are expanding the safety net to meet more flights returning from Southeast Asia. Since Sunday, CDC quarantine officers or their designees have been meeting travelers returning directly to the U.S. from Hong Kong on commercial carriers that land at 5 U.S. airports (Chicago, Los Angeles, Newark, New York City, San Francisco) to give them health information in the event they exhibit symptoms of SARS. No commercial flights return directly to the United States from Hanoi, Vietnam or Goungdong Province China. Quarantine officers or their designees are now meeting passengers landing from Hong Kong in Anchorage and Guam, and coverage has expanded to include travelers returning on commercial flights that have connecting service from affected areas of Southeast Asia and is further expanding to include cargo and cruise ships returning to U.S. ports.

Hong Kong makes link between SARS cases and hotel stay

The Hong Kong Department of Health has reported 7 individuals who contracted SARS are now known to have stayed on or visited the 9th floor of the Metropole Hotel in Kowloon in the period between February 12 and March 2. Hotel staff has reported no subsequent illness. CDC is in communication with Hong Kong officials as well as WHO investigators as the significance of the hotel connection is explored. Based on this report, as well as experience with the case patients who traveled to Georgia

and New York City, who also stayed in hotels, CDC continues to believe that close contact is an important factor in disease transmission.

For more information on SARS, visit the CDC web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars/>

On Thursday, March 20, 2003, a Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) will be published with more information on SARS.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) protects people's health and safety by preventing and controlling diseases and injuries; enhances health decisions by providing credible information on critical health issues; and promotes healthy living through strong partnerships with local, national and international organizations.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES