

EPI CONNECTIONS

April 2009

A Monthly Newsletter of the Communicable Disease Division

E. coli Outbreak Associated with National Western Stock Show

An outbreak of E. coli O157 (Shiga toxin producing E. coli) cases among children on the Front Range is being investigated by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) in conjunction with several local public health agencies, including Boulder County Public Health (BCPH). As of February 20, there have been 24 laboratory-confirmed PFGE (molecular typing) matched cases, and 5 additional probable cases have lab results pending. Of the 29 total cases, 8 appear to be secondary cases among household contacts or child care centers. Thus far, 2 children have developed Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome. There have been no deaths related to this outbreak.

Based on preliminary investigation findings, the common exposure among these cases is attendance at the National Western Stock Show, January 10-25, 2009. BCPH staff is currently assisting CDPHE with a matched case control study to determine exposure and risk factors for young children that attended the large farm animal exhibits and "petting zoos." Laboratory testing of specimens from the grounds of the stock show are pending.

Because of the large number of young children that have been affected, it is important to remain vigilant for secondary outbreaks of STEC O157 in child care settings. Children who test positive for E. coli O157 must not return to child care until they have provided two stool samples that are negative for E. coli O157 and/or Shiga toxin.

E. coli infections are diarrheal illnesses that are caused by one of hundreds of strains of a bacterium called Escherichia coli. The type of E. coli that causes serious illness is O157:H7 (E. coli O157:H7). Although most strains are harmless and live in the intestines of healthy humans and animals, E. coli O157:H7 produces a powerful toxin that can cause severe illness. E. coli bacteria is found throughout the world.

For more information about E. coli O157:H7 visit www.bouldercounty.org/health/hpe/cdc/diseases/eColi/index.htm

Contributed by Gail Wright

Use ONE Needle, ONE Syringe, Only ONE Time

Unsafe injection practices by health care professionals in the United States have potentially exposed more than 60,000 patients to hepatitis B or C over the past decade, according to a review by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

At least 33 hepatitis outbreaks have occurred since 1998 due to inadequate health care practices. Unsafe injection practices, such as reuse of syringes, accounted for most of the infections and exposures.

Each outbreak took place in non-hospital or outpatient health care settings and involved the reuse of syringes. Among the problems identified in these outbreaks were a lack of oversight of personnel and failure to follow up on reported breaches in infection control practices in ambulatory settings.

All health care providers are urged to carefully review their infection control practices and the practices of all staff under their supervision. The following recommendations apply to the use of needles; cannulae that replace needles; and, where applicable, intravenous delivery systems:

1. Use aseptic technique to avoid contamination of sterile injection equipment.
2. Do not administer medications from a syringe to multiple patients, even if the needle or cannula on the syringe is changed. Needles, cannulae, and syringes are sterile, single-use items; they should not be reused for another patient or to access a medication or solution that might be used for a subsequent patient.



One Needle, continued on page 2



Medical Volunteers to Play an Important Role in County Flood Exercise

The Medical Reserve Corps of Boulder County (MRCBC) will open a special needs population shelter at the North Boulder Recreation Center from 8 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. on April 16 as part of a county-wide, full-scale flood exercise. The exercise will give MRCBC members the opportunity to work with “victims” and caretakers to assess their health care needs and determine who should be served at the shelter. During the exercise, MRCBC members will triage “victims” as they arrive at the recreation center, identify caretakers, complete intake forms, and monitor client health care needs. They will also develop a discharge plan at the conclusion of the exercise.

The special needs shelter is designed to be a site for:

- Patients receiving home health care treatment and their caretakers
- School-aged children with special health needs and their families
- Patients with mental health diagnoses who are undergoing medical treatment

The aim is to provide residents with high-risk needs with a place to relocate during a natural disaster or emergency, if they have no other place to go. The shelter will have emergency generators to maintain electricity during an actual emergency or disaster.

The goal of the April exercise is to help residents better understand the county’s response to natural disasters, and to provide a wide variety of city and county agencies and non-governmental organizations an opportunity to work together.

You can help:

- Volunteer to play a “victim” or caretaker for the April exercise.
- Join the MRCBC and exercise your health care skills with us.

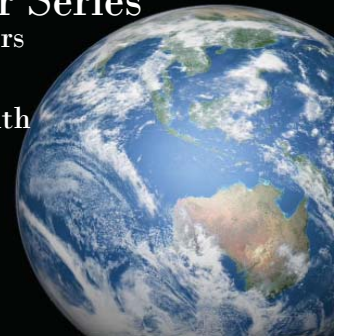
For more information, contact L. Cheryl Runyon, MRCBC Coordinator, at 303.413.7561, or lrnyon@bouldercounty.org, or visit www.bouldercountyMRC.org

Contributed by Cheryl Runyon

Big Shot Seminar Series for immunization providers

Third Tuesday every month
February - June 2009
12 noon - 2 p.m.

For more information, visit www.BoulderCountyShots.org.

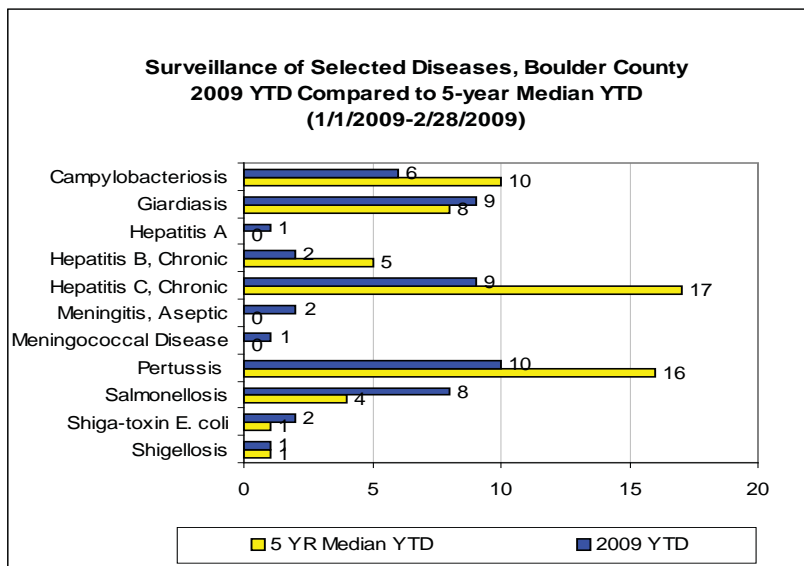


One Needle continued from page 1

3. Use fluid infusion and administration sets (i.e. intravenous bags, tubing, and connectors) for one patient only and dispose of appropriately after use. Consider a syringe or needle/cannula to be contaminated after it has been used to enter or connect to a patient’s intravenous infusion bag or administration set.
4. Use single-dose vials for parenteral medications whenever possible.
5. Do not administer medications from single-dose vials or ampules to multiple patients or combine leftover contents for later use.
6. Use a sterile needle or cannula and syringe to access the multidose vial if multidose vials must be used.
7. Do not keep multidose vials in the immediate patient treatment area, and store them in accordance with the manufacturer’s recommendations; discard them if sterility is compromised or questionable.
8. Do not use bags or bottles of intravenous solution as a common source of supply for multiple patients.

The Safe Injection Practices Coalition has been formed to educate the public and health care providers about injection safety. For more information, visit www.ONEandONLYcampaign.org or www.CDC.gov.

Contributed by Kyila Holcomb



Pertussis is Back in Boulder County

While incidence of pertussis in 2008 was at its lowest in at least 12 years, there have already been 10 cases in Boulder County in 2009, including 2 outbreaks. Providers should remain vigilant in including pertussis in their differential diagnosis, as appropriate.

Salmonellosis incidence remains high during early 2009, predominantly due to nationwide outbreaks of foodborne salmonella.