



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

NEWS RELEASE

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SECOND LOCALLY ACQUIRED HUMAN CASE OF HANTAVIRUS REPORTED

County Health and Human Services Agency, Department of Environmental Health Continue Surveillance

The San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency reports the second locally acquired human case of hantavirus pulmonary syndrome in San Diego County.

The individual, a 65-year-old San Diego man, likely acquired the illness this summer in the Laguna Mountains. The first case, a 32-year-old woman, was reported in June.

“Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome is relatively rare but potentially fatal,” said Nancy Bowen, M.D., San Diego County Public Health Officer. “There is no specific treatment other than supportive care, but the sooner care is received, the more likely it will be effective.”

Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome is caused by a virus carried by wild rodents, primarily deer mice. Over the past several years, the virus has been found in wild rodents in San Diego County. Infected rodents shed the virus in their droppings, urine and saliva. People most commonly become infected when they stir up and inhale airborne particles of contaminated rodent droppings, urine and saliva. The virus may also be spread by touching the mouth and nose after handling infected rodents or contaminated objects.

According to Dr. Bowen, the first signs of illness are similar to flu symptoms and include fatigue, fever and muscle aches; they may also include headache, dizziness, chills, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and abdominal pain. Later symptoms of hantavirus pulmonary syndrome include coughing, shortness of breath rapidly progressing to severe difficulty in breathing, and sometimes death.

Since the disease was first recognized in May 1993, there have been a total of 379 human cases of hantavirus pulmonary syndrome reported in the United States, as of Sept. 1, 2004. A little over a third of those reported cases resulted in death. There are several precautions that may be taken to avoid exposure to the virus. Avoid rodent infested areas and minimize stirring up dust or material that may be contaminated with virus-laden particles. Use wet clean-up methods; do not sweep or vacuum.

For tips on how to avoid hantavirus, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention web site, www.cdc.gov, and click on Diseases and Conditions. For information on hantavirus, contact the Department of Environmental Health’s Vector Surveillance and Control Program at (858) 694-2888, or visit the web site at <http://www.co.san-diego.ca.us/deh/index.html>.

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