

June 22, 2005

FROM:

**HIV, STD and Hepatitis Prevention Branch
Public Health Services
Health and Human Services Agency
County of San Diego**

**Contents – STDHEP Update #17
Information Regarding Availability of Benzathine Penicillin**

Information from the STD Control Officer, California Department of Health Services

Benzathine penicillin availability

The STD Control Branch has received reports that some clinical facilities in California are having difficulty obtaining Benzathine penicillin G (BPG) to treat syphilis. Thus far, several local health jurisdictions, including Orange, Santa Clara, and Sonoma Counties, have been directly affected by shortages. In addition to having to query multiple wholesalers, some clinics have been charged double the previous cost. It appears that the availability (and pricing) can change with very short notice. Unfortunately, fluctuations in price and availability are expected for the near future and we are unable to estimate when the shortage will be over.

According to a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) alert sent on February 3, 2005, the production of Bicillin L-A, the BPG-containing product, has been hindered by changes in the manufacturing process. Although King (Monarch) Pharmaceuticals (Bristol, Tennessee) purchased the rights to Bicillin L-A from Wyeth-Ayerst more than five years ago, Wyeth-Ayerst was manufacturing the product for King Pharmaceuticals as part of an agreement. The agreement ended earlier this year. King Pharmaceuticals has begun production of Bicillin L-A, but is not yet manufacturing Bicillin L-A at full capacity. However, they are releasing the product to the large wholesale companies on a weekly basis.

Any project area experiencing a shortage should ask their wholesale company to check supplies with other distribution centers within the wholesale company. Wholesalers for Bicillin L-A include Cardinal Health, McKesson, Henry Schein, Amerisource Bergen, Adventist Pasteur, and Dubin Medical, Incorporated. In addition, other CDC project areas have indicated their willingness to redistribute available stock. For example, the Utah Department of Health STD Program has 25 to 30 boxes (more than 100 treatments) that expire at the end of June 2005. If you are having difficulty obtaining Bicillin L-A, please notify Dr. Heidi Bauer at Hbauer@dhs.ca.gov so that she can assist you in getting Bicillin L-A and work with the CDC to coordinate distribution of the available drug.

Assistance for providers experiencing difficulties in obtaining Bicillin LA is also available from the County of San Diego HIV, STD and Hepatitis Branch. Contact information is listed below.

Recruit a Colleague!

Do you have colleagues who would benefit from receiving STDHEP Updates?

If so, please pass this Update on to them!

STDHEP Updates are sent 4 – 5 times per year, and include **time-sensitive information** about **STDs and viral hepatitis**. Member emails are confidential, and users can unsubscribe at any time.

To join the STDHEP Email List, send an email to STDHEP.HHSA@sdcounty.ca.gov with “Join” in the subject line.

You can also call Craig Sturak, 619-692-8369, and ask to be added to the list.

STD clinic services, which include a dark-field examination of any suspect primary syphilis lesion, complete STD screening, and selective risk-based Hepatitis vaccination, are available 5 days a week on a walk-in basis. Call 619-692-8550 for times and locations. Field and Community Services staff members are available to assist in any way, including transportation of clients to the clinic. Please call 619-692-8501 for assistance.