August 24, 2017

Re: Ongoing Hepatitis A outbreak in San Diego County

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is to notify USD campus groups who do outreach in San Diego of an ongoing outbreak of Hepatitis A among the homeless population in San Diego County. Hepatitis A is a viral illness that can be contracted from food or water, or through direct contact with an infected person. People can prevent contracting Hepatitis A by through self-protective practices, including immunization. More information about the outbreak, Hepatitis A, and prevention are detailed below:

1. What is Hepatitis A?
Hepatitis A is a highly contagious liver infection caused by the Hepatitis A virus (HAV). It can cause liver disease, which may last a few weeks and sometimes progress to a serious illness lasting months. In some cases, people can die, but in most cases the infection is self-limiting.

2. How is Hepatitis A spread?
Hepatitis A is usually transmitted by the fecal-oral route, either through person-to-person contact or consumption of contaminated food or water.

3. What are the symptoms of Hepatitis A?
HAV does not always cause symptoms. Symptoms, when present, include fever, fatigue, and nausea, loss of appetite, yellowing of the eyes (jaundice), stomach pain, vomiting, dark urine, pale stools, and diarrhea. HAV can rarely cause liver failure and even death. Symptoms can develop 15 to 50 days after being infected. HAV can be spread up to two weeks before and one week after noticing symptoms. It can also be spread by individuals who are infected, but do not have symptoms.

4. What are the details of the current outbreak in San Diego?
Between late November 2016 and August 22, 2017, 352 cases of Hepatitis A have been reported in San Diego County, with most cases occurring since March 2017. This is significantly higher
than the one or two cases per month typically reported. 14 people have died, and 264 have been hospitalized.
The majority of persons impacted in this outbreak have been homeless and/or persons using illicit drugs and men who have sex with men.

5. How can Hepatitis A be prevented?
Persons who come into direct contact with a person who has, or may have, Hepatitis A should wear disposable gloves, and wash hands frequently or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers. They should avoid consuming food or water that may be contaminated.

The best way to prevent Hepatitis A is through vaccination with the Hepatitis A vaccine. The Hepatitis A vaccine series consists of two shots 6 months apart. The vaccine is extremely safe and effective. Protection is high even after just one shot. Many people have already been vaccinated for Hepatitis A, either in childhood or before travel to a high-risk area. Any person who has received the 2-shot series is generally protected for life.

The vaccine is available at the Student Health Center ($40 per dose for currently registered students, fee waived with SHIP insurance), as well as through many pharmacies and most healthcare providers.

USD students who would like to get the Hepatitis A vaccine, or to check their vaccine status, can schedule an immunization visit at the Student Health Center via the web portal www.mywellness.sandiego.edu.

More information about Hepatitis A and HAV vaccine is available from

The CDC: [https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hav/index.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hav/index.htm)


If you have any questions, feel free to contact me, or one of the Student Health Center medical providers.

Sincerely,

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