

October 29 2014

Dear Colleague:

UPDATE ON SYPHILIS OUTBREAK

- The Winnipeg Health Region (WHR) is continuing to experience an **outbreak of infectious syphilis**.
- There have been 60 cases reported in the first ten months of 2014, which is the fastest spreading and **highest number ever recorded in the WHR**.
- Most cases are being diagnosed in men who have sex with men.
- About one third of cases are HIV positive and cases are spread evenly throughout almost all community areas in Winnipeg.
- Province-wide, there have been 68 confirmed infectious syphilis cases reported to-date (Oct 29, 2014).
- While the majority of cases have been reported within the WHR, **cases have also been reported in all other RHAs**.

Testing:

- **ALL persons who present with symptoms of syphilis** such as painless genital or oral ulcers, generalized maculopapular rash (typically including palms and soles) and/or lymphadenopathy. *See MHHLS protocol for details on clinical presentations.*
- **In addition to testing symptomatic persons, also screen the following persons:**
 - **ALL pregnant persons** - congenital syphilis is often severe, disabling, and life-threatening
 - **ALL persons reporting unprotected sex with casual or anonymous partners should be routinely tested for sexually transmitted infections (STI) every 3-6 months.**
 - **ALL persons requesting STI testing.**
 - **ALL persons with any confirmed or suspected STI** such as gonorrhea or chlamydia.
 - Consider offering serology for all patients as part of routine care.

What to send to Cadham Provincial Laboratory (CPL):

- 5-10 ml blood in a red-stoppered tube or a serum separator tube (red top with yellow cap)
- CPL requisition form should request syphilis serology testing and HIV antibody testing; and should **provide information on reason for testing, including symptoms or suspected stage of syphilis**. (Consider choosing CPL's STI panel which includes serology testing for syphilis, HIV and hepatitis B.)
- Swab ulcers, sores, or moist skin lesions with a dacron swab of the lesion and place into viral transport medium. The sample must remain refrigerated until sent to CPL and the CPL requisition should clearly indicate the site and test requested (i.e., *T. pallidum* PCR testing).

Treatment:

- **Benzathine penicillin G (Bicillin®) 2.4 million units IM** in a single session (separated into 2 injections). *See MHHLS protocol for information on allergy, pregnancy and HIV positive persons.*
- The Bicillin® in preloaded syringes is provided free of charge by MHHLS (see order form below)
- **Sex contacts of known syphilis cases MUST ALSO be treated immediately for syphilis, without awaiting testing results.**

Reporting:

- Syphilis is reportable under *The Public Health Act*. If you are contacted by a public health nurse for follow up of your patient who has an STI, your collaboration and assistance would be greatly appreciated.

Resources:

- Manitoba Health Healthy Living and Seniors (MHLS) – Syphilis Protocol
<http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/protocol/syphilis.pdf>.
- Cadham Provincial Laboratory (CPL) – Serology: 204-945-6123
- Manitoba Health Healthy Living and Seniors (MHLS) STI Medication Order Form
<http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/protocol/form11.pdf>

Sincerely,**Original Signed by**

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