

EPI Update for Friday, October 19, 2012
Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology (CADE)
Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH)

Items for this week's EPI Update include:

- **Multi-state fungal meningitis outbreak update**
- **Influenza activity update**
- **Hope for chocolate lovers**
- **Meeting announcements and training opportunities**

Multi-state fungal meningitis outbreak update

CDC and FDA have confirmed the presence of a fungus known as *Exserohilum rostratum* in unopened medication vials of preservative-free methylprednisolone acetate (80mg/ml) from one of the three implicated lots. (None of these lots were delivered to Iowa entities.)

As of October 17, 2012, a total of 47 patients have laboratory-confirmed fungal meningitis, and all but two were confirmed as *Exserohilum rostratum* (the other two were *Aspergillus fumigatus* and *Cladosporium* infections). It is estimated that approximately 14,000 patients may have received injections from the three implicated lots of methylprednisolone. Almost 97 percent have now been contacted for further follow-up. None are located in Iowa. Investigation continues to determine if other infections are associated with other products.

Clinicians need to remain vigilant for onset of symptoms because fungal infections can be slow to develop. In this outbreak, symptoms typically have appeared one to four weeks following injection, but it's important to recognize longer and shorter periods of time between injection and onset of symptoms have been reported.

For the most up-to-date information regarding this outbreak, visit www.cdc.gov/HAI/outbreaks/meningitis.html.

Influenza activity increasing locally

Influenza activity in Iowa has been upgraded from sporadic to local due to recent increases in laboratory-confirmed flu cases (especially in children) and outbreaks in central Iowa. The increasing number of flu cases is a strong reminder that influenza is in Iowa and it is time to get vaccinated. For more information about influenza, visit www.idph.state.ia.us/Cade/Influenza.aspx.

Hope for chocolate lovers

Studies in recent years have given people around the world yet another excuse to eat chocolate - it may make you smarter. With all the brainpower on display this week as this year's Nobel Prize winners were announced, one may wonder if countries with high amounts of chocolate consumption produce more Nobel Prize winners than their chocolate-deficient counterparts.

A recent study has shown just that; according to an article in this month's New England Journal of Medicine, Switzerland led the way in per capita chocolate consumption *and* Nobel laureates. The U.S. was near the middle of the pack in both.

The mechanism remains a mystery. An obvious hypothesis is that chocolate consumption increases mental function, spawning great scientific ideas. However, it could instead be that people celebrate a Nobel laureates in their midst by eating chocolate, thus reversing the causal chain.

More long-term studies are needed. Always eager to help the scientific communities in any way, those of us in CADE have graciously volunteered to participate in the "chocolate" arm of the next study. For those interested, there will be plenty of openings in the "non-chocolate" arm.

For the complete article, please visit www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMon1211064.

Meeting announcements and training opportunities

CADE Fall EPI Update XVI

Wednesday, October 31, 2012, 10:00 to 12:00 CDT. Register for this webinar at www1.gotomeeting.com/register/538508425. Target audience includes local public health and infection control prevention partners.

Have a healthy and happy week!

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