

**EPI Update for Friday, March 21, 2014**  
**Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology (CADE)**  
**Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH)**

Items for this week's EPI Update include:

- **2014 Cancer in Iowa Report released**
- **Recent increase in VISA isolates sent to SHL**
- **MERS vs. SARS**
- **Norovirus outbreaks: Stay home when ill**
- **Meeting announcements and training opportunities**

**2014 Cancer in Iowa Report released**

The 2014 Cancer in Iowa Report was recently released by the State Health Registry of Iowa. The latest annual report estimates 17,400 new cancers will be diagnosed among Iowa residents in 2014. In addition, an estimated 6,400 Iowans will die from cancer.

Lung cancer remains the top cancer killer of Iowans, accounting for about one out of every four cancer deaths in Iowa. The number of lung cancer deaths exceeds female breast, prostate, and colorectal cancers combined.

This year's report includes a special section on HPV and related cancers. HPV infections and HPV-related cancers are a health concern not only to women, but to men as well. In Iowa between 2006 and 2011, almost 40 percent of HPV-related cancers were in men. HPV-related oropharynx cancers, for instance, are about three times more common in men than women. These are found in the base of the tongue and in the throat including the tonsils. According to the CDC, about 8,400 people in the U.S. are diagnosed each year with cancers of the oropharynx that may be caused by HPV.

To view the report, visit: [www.public-health.uiowa.edu/shri/pubs/pdf/Cancer\\_2014.pdf](http://www.public-health.uiowa.edu/shri/pubs/pdf/Cancer_2014.pdf)

**Recent increase in VISA isolates sent to SHL**

*Staphylococcus aureus* isolates that exhibit decreased susceptibility to vancomycin are of clinical and public health importance. There has been an increase in recent years in the number of Vancomycin-intermediate *Staphylococcus aureus* (VISA) specimens submitted to SHL for confirmation, including three within the last few weeks. While VISA is not reportable, it is still important to send these isolates to SHL to identify isolates that show resistance.

The originating laboratory should call SHL prior to sending the VISA isolate so the proper quality control organisms and media can be prepared before the isolate arrives. Please follow the updated protocol listed on SHL's Sentinel Lab Training page: [www.shl.uiowa.edu/dcd/sentlabtrain/micronotes.xml](http://www.shl.uiowa.edu/dcd/sentlabtrain/micronotes.xml)

Vancomycin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (VRSA) is immediately reportable to IDPH and specimens are required to be sent to SHL for confirmation.

### **MERS vs. SARS**

Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) are coronaviruses with many similarities. Both viruses appear to have originated in bats and likely spread to humans via intermediate hosts (civet cats for SARS, and possibly camels for MERS). Both viruses have caused hospital outbreaks involving caregivers and other patients, though MERS is currently less infectious than SARS.

There are key differences, however. The case fatality rate for MERS (40%) is much higher than SARS (10%). MERS has predominately affected older individuals, especially men (65% of sporadic cases), though SARS cases were primarily young and both sexes were equally affected.

If you suspect a patient may be infected with MERS, please contact IDPH immediately assistance to organize appropriate testing and for testing approval. Information about the testing can be found at [www.shl.uiowa.edu/news/mers.xml](http://www.shl.uiowa.edu/news/mers.xml)

For more information on the difference between MERS and SARS, visit: [www.healio.com/infectious-disease](http://www.healio.com/infectious-disease) and search "MERS"

### **Norovirus outbreaks: Stay home when ill**

A Virginia school was recently closed for environmental cleaning after a norovirus outbreak sickened over 230 students and staff. This came weeks after a cruise ship was forced to return to port after 600 passengers and staff became ill with norovirus. These outbreaks remind us just how easily norovirus can spread from person to person.

Thus, all health care workers need to remind patients, who are ill with vomiting or diarrhea probably due to norovirus, to stay home from school or work until 24 hours or more after symptoms have stopped. Patients should also be reminded that hand gels are ineffective against norovirus, and that hand washing must be used to prevent spreading this virus to others.

### **Meeting announcements and training opportunities**

None

### **Have a healthy and happy and warmer week!**

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