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County Executive

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Commissioner, Department of Health

ATTENTION

Public Health Update

The Westchester County Department of Health provides public health updates to members of the medical community on important issues affecting public health in Westchester

6 September 2002

West Nile Virus Update

- **The first human case of West Nile Virus in Westchester County this year has been identified in an 83 year old male from the Town of Mamaroneck.**
- **Please report immediately by telephone to the Westchester County Department of Health (813-5000) any adult or pediatric patient with suspected viral encephalitis.**
- **A total of 13 human cases of West Nile viral disease have been diagnosed as of 9/6/02 among residents in the New York City metropolitan area (New York, and Connecticut states), including two fatal cases.**
- **Physicians are reminded to educate patients about taking personal protective measures against mosquito bites and eliminating standing water around their homes. Please refer to the Physician's Corner and West Nile Virus pages on the WCDH website (www.westchestergov.com/health) for additional information, including materials for patient education.**

Please distribute to staff in the Departments of Internal Medicine, Pediatrics, Family Medicine, Neurology, Infectious Diseases, Emergency Medicine, Critical Care and Laboratory Medicine

Dear Colleagues,

The Westchester County Department of Health (WCDH) was notified by the New York State Department of Health that an 83-year-old man from the Town of Mamaroneck has tested positive for West Nile (WN) virus. This is the first identified human case of WN virus in Westchester County this year. The patient became ill with high fevers and mental status changes on 8/22/02 and was hospitalized on 8/25/02. Neurological consultation (including a lumbar puncture with elevated WBCs and protein) confirmed meningo-

encephalitis and proximal muscle weakness. Serum and cerebrospinal fluid tested positive for IgM ELISA antibody to WN virus, which meets Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) criteria for infection. The patient does not have a history of recent transfusions or organ transplantation. The patient had spent most of his time at home, did not travel outside the Southern Westchester area during the incubation period for WN virus, and thus was most likely exposed to infected mosquitoes in the immediate vicinity of his home. The man is recovering from his illness in the hospital.

Regional and Westchester WNV Update

Fourteen human cases of WNV disease have been confirmed in New York State, 12 of which are residents of the NYC metropolitan area and two of which are residents of upstate counties. In addition to the one case in Westchester County, these cases have occurred in Nassau County (two cases), Suffolk County (three cases, one death), New York City (six cases, one death), Yates County (one case), and Onondaga County (one case). Also, one case each from Greenwich, Connecticut and Ewing, New Jersey (in the Trenton area) has been confirmed. Information on national surveillance can be found at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention site: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/index.htm>

West Nile virus activity has also been detected in birds and mosquitoes throughout Westchester County (see Table 1). In response to the human case and these findings, the Westchester County Department of Health will be conducting additional local environmental assessment including monitoring in the area of the man's home for potential mosquito breeding grounds, assessing the need for additional larviciding in and around the Town of Mamaroneck, and conducting additional mosquito trapping in the area. The Westchester County Department of Health continues to review ongoing mosquito, bird and human surveillance data. **No spraying for mosquitoes is planned for Westchester County at this time.**

Recently the CDC has been investigating WN virus cases possibly linked to transfusions and organ transplantation. The Westchester County case does not appear to be linked to this cluster. For further information on WN virus and transfusions, please see the CDC (<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/qa/transfusion.htm>) and FDA (<http://www.fda.gov/oc/opacom/hottopics/westnile.html>) websites. **At present, data are insufficient to indicate any changes to existing organ or blood donor screening and testing practices.**

This is currently the time of greatest risk for acquiring WNV infection. **WCDH continues to request that physicians remain alert for potential cases of WN viral disease for the remainder of the adult mosquito season** (which ends after the first sustained frost).

To ensure the rapid identification of human WN virus infection, we are requesting that providers **report immediately** by telephone to the Westchester County Department of Health any adult or pediatric patient with suspected viral encephalitis as defined below:

- a. Fever $\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}$ or 100°F , and
- b. Altered mental status (altered level of consciousness, agitation, lethargy) and/or other evidence of cortical involvement (e.g., focal neurologic findings, seizures), and
- c. CSF pleocytosis with predominant lymphocytes and/or elevated protein and a negative gram stain and culture, with or without
- d. Muscle weakness (especially flaccid paralysis) confirmed by neurologic exam or EMG.

WCHD also is reminding physicians of the importance of educating their patients, particularly those over the age of 50 who are at higher risk of developing more severe disease if infected with WNV, to take precautions against mosquito bites. All patients/residents should be urged to eliminate standing water around their homes. Further information and fact sheets for patients are available at WCDH website

(www.westchestergov.com/health).

TO REPORT A SUSPECT CASE AND ARRANGE FOR TESTING, CALL THE WESTCHESTER COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AT:

(914) 813-5159 Mon-Fri 8:30 AM - 4:30 PM

(914) 813-5000 24 hours/day; 7 days/week

Table 1: Summary of West Nile Virus Findings in Westchester County to Date

West Nile Positive Results 2002 YTD	
Birds	24
Mosquito Pools	26
Humans	1

The Westchester County Health Department thanks the medical and laboratory communities for their continued collaboration in the investigation of communicable diseases.

Sincerely,

Belinda Ostrowsky

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