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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

August 19, 2003

First Human Case of West Nile Virus Identified in New York City during the 2003 Mosquito Season in an 86-year-old Female Resident of the Bronx

- **Please report all suspected cases of Viral Encephalitis to the Westchester County Health Department (914-813-5159 M-F 8:30-4:30 PM or 914-813-5000 24 hours/day, 7 days/week)**
- **No human cases of West Nile Virus have been identified in Westchester County**

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,

An 86-year-old female resident of the Bronx has been diagnosed with West Nile (WN) viral infection, which represents the first confirmed human case of WN virus in New York during the 2003 mosquito season. The patient became ill on August 11th and was hospitalized the same day with symptoms of fever, headache, muscle weakness, rash, stiff neck and altered mental status. She was subsequently diagnosed with encephalitis and continues to be hospitalized in intensive care*.

West Nile virus activity has been detected in birds and mosquitoes, but not humans, in Westchester County (see Table 1). In response to these findings, the Health Department is continuing surveillance of mosquitoes, mosquito breeding sites, larviciding, and public education. No spraying for mosquitoes is planned for Westchester County at this time. Additionally WN viral activity has been detected in all five boroughs of New York City, Connecticut, throughout New York State, and New Jersey. In New York State, only New York City has identified a human case at this time. In other areas of the United States, WN viral activity continues to expand, with 41 states reporting WN virus activity. To date, 537 human cases have been reported in 27 states, with 11 fatalities. Further 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>

*We wish to thank New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene for the information regarding the New York City Case. 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.

A NYSDOH Viral Encephalitis/Meningitis Case Report form should be completed for each suspect case and faxed to the WCDH at (914) 813-5182. A copy of the form should also be submitted with the laboratory specimens. Please call (914) 813-5180 if you need copies of this form.

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	1
Mosquito Pools	5 (out of 379 pools tested)
Humans	0

Please refer to the [Physician's Corner](#) page on the Westchester County Health Department web site, www.westchestergov.com/health, for additional information, including materials for patient education. The Westchester County Health Department thanks the medical and laboratory communities for their continued collaboration in the investigation of communicable diseases.

Sincerely,

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