



August 18, 2005

To: Douglas County Health Care Providers

From: Adi M. Pour, Ph.D., Health Director
Jose R. Romero, M.D., Medical Advisor

Re: **Physician Advisory: Pertussis (whooping cough) on the rise again in Douglas County**

In the past two weeks, the Douglas County Health Department (DCHD) has received reports of seven laboratory confirmed *Bordetella pertussis* infections. This brings to 36 the total number reported in 2005. Twenty-three (64%) of the infections occurred in infants and children 0 – 4 years of age and 10 (28%) among children 5 – 18 years of age, with the remaining three (8%) in individuals 19 years of age and older.

Pertussis in infants, particularly in those 6 months of age and younger, can be a very severe disease. In 2005, there have been seven hospitalizations among the 36 infected individuals, all of which were in infants under one year of age.

Transmission of pertussis to infants and young children often occurs through contact with infected adolescents and adults who have undiagnosed pertussis. **DCHD is asking physicians to maintain a high index of suspicion for pertussis in persons presenting with cough illness. Pertussis should be considered when evaluating patients with an acute cough illness lasting two weeks or longer, regardless of immunization status.** It should also be considered when evaluating patients who have had contact with an individual diagnosed with pertussis in the preceding 21 days. **Only symptomatic persons should be tested.** Asymptomatic persons should not be tested, regardless of whether there has been contact with a case or whether an outbreak is occurring.

On June 20, 2005, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended that adolescents 11 and 12 years of age be given Tdap in place of the tetanus-diphtheria (Td) booster currently given to adolescents. The committee also recommended that Tdap be given to adolescents 13 through 18 who missed the 11 to 12 year dose of Td, and adolescents 11 to 18 who have already been vaccinated with Td are encouraged to receive a dose of Tdap to further protect against pertussis. DCHD encourages physicians to utilize Tdap when immunizing adolescents. This is especially important given the 2004 Douglas County experience where documented transmission of pertussis occurred in school settings, particularly in middle and high schools. Further information on Tdap can be found at: http://www.cdc.gov/nip/pr/pr_tdap_jun2005.htm

Testing and treatment recommendations, pertussis fact sheets and surveillance information can be found on the DCHD web site at: <http://www.douglascountyhealth.com/index.php>

***Bordetella pertussis* infections should be reported to the Douglas County Health Department Epidemiology Section at 444-7214 (Monday–Friday 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.) or 444-7000 (after hours only).**

If you have any questions, please contact the Douglas County Health Department at 444-7214.

Thank you for providing quality health care to our community!