Medical News

FDA Approves Latex Allergy Test

Latex allergies surfaced in the late 1980s in the US, mostly among healthcare workers who wear latex gloves daily and among patients who undergo frequent medical procedures. Reactions range from mild skin irritation to, very rarely, fatal anaphylactic shock.

Approximately 1% of the general population is thought to have allergy to latex. It is estimated that as many as 15% of healthcare workers and more than 34% of spina bifida patients (who are exposed repeatedly to latex tips on enema bottles) have latex allergy.

The Food and Drug Administration has approved a test that will identify serum antibodies that react to the proteins found in latex. This new latex allergy test, the Alastat test, is made by Diagnostic Products Corporation and has a sensitivity of 94%. It will cost laboratories approximately $5 per test.

FROM: AMA. FDA OKs test for latex allergy. *AMA* News April 10, 1995, p 26.

NIOSH Develops Videotape on Aerosol Production During Surgery

The National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health recently developed a video that presents the results of a study of aerosol production during surgical procedures, including information on the nature of aerosols and description of aerosol measurement instruments. Four types of surgical procedures were studied (laryngeal, gynecologic, orthopedic, and plastic) and the risks associated with specific types of surgical tools (electro-scalpel, cautery, laser). Suggestions are provided for reducing the risk of aerosol exposures, such as cooling of power tools, use of smoke evacuators, and placement of personnel to avoid interruption of air flow patterns. For information about obtaining a copy on loan of "Identification of Aerosol Production During Surgical Procedures" (Program No. 171), send a written request to Roger Wheeler, NIOSH, Mail Stop C-12, 4676 Columbia Pkwy, Cincinnati, OH 45226.

Columbia/HCA Creates AIDS Network

Columbia/HCA Healthcare Inc. is teaming up with Group Practice Consultants Inc, Miami, Florida, to launch what it calls the nation's first fully integrated and comprehensive HIV treatment network. The managed care program, which will feature a continuum of service for AIDS and HIV patients, will be available initially in south Florida and later will expand to other parts of the state. Company officials say the program will offer patients a broad array of services not found in most managed care networks, including pharmacy, education, prevention, holistic therapies, chiropractic services, exercise, and dentistry.

FROM: Managed *Care Outlook* March 10, 1995, p 7.

California's Orange County Reports 14% Drop in TB Cases

Tuberculosis (TB) cases in Orange County, California, have declined by 14% (from 619 in 1993 to 547 in 1994) in the year following a TB outbreak that involved more than 100 students who were exposed to an undiagnosed student with drug-resistant disease at a local high school.

County health officials said the drop in TB cases was encouraging after a 4-year climb and was the result of aggressive contact tracing and frequent use of directly observed therapy. Since the 1993 outbreak, public health workers and nurses have been dispatched into communities to ensure that those infected take their medications for the required amount of time. Progress also has been made toward prompt reporting of cases. A state law took effect in 1994 that requires health facilities to notify the county of treatment plans for TB patients before discharge or transfer.

FROM: 1994 TB cases drop 14 percent in California's Orange County. *AIDS Weekly* April 3, 1995, p 22.

New Russian Law Requires HIV Testing of Visitors

A controversial law in Russia, which called for mandatory HIV testing of all visitors to the country, has been amended. The lower house of parliament unanimously accepted the amendment put forth by President Boris Yeltsin exempting from testing persons visiting the country for less than 3 months. Diplomats also will be exempt, but other foreigners who intend to stay for more than 3 months either must produce recent certification that they are HIV negative, or they must be tested upon arrival. The new law is scheduled to take effect on August 1, 1995.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has consistently denounced governments that make HIV testing a requirement for foreigners entering a country. WHO offi-

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