



Memorandum

Date: March 20, 2003

To: North Dakota Providers,

From: Tracy K. Miller, MPH

RE: Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have been investigating reports of patients with severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) traveling from Hong Kong and Guandong Province, People's Republic of China and Hanoi, Vietnam.

The initial case was hospitalized for treatment of severe, acute respiratory syndrome of unknown origin. Following his admission to the hospital, approximately 20 hospital staff became sick with similar symptoms. No link has so far been made between these outbreaks of acute respiratory illness in Hanoi and Hong Kong and the outbreak of "bird flu", A(H5N1) in Hong Kong.

The cause of these illnesses is unknown. The patients present with influenza-like symptoms such as fever, myalgias, headache, sore throat, dry cough, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing. In some cases these symptoms are followed by hypoxia, pneumonia, and occasionally acute respiratory distress requiring mechanical ventilation and death. Laboratory findings may include thrombocytopenia and leukopenia. Some close contacts, including healthcare workers, have developed similar illnesses. In response to these developments, CDC is initiating surveillance for cases of SARS among recent travelers or their close contacts.

Enclosed are interim recommendations regarding SARS for healthcare providers. CDC will continue to provide periodic information for healthcare providers and other agencies. Updated information is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/sars>.

The Centers for Disease Control has established telephone numbers for providers and the public to call for questions regarding SARS. The telephone numbers are:

- Clinicians and health department callers: 770-488-7100 at the Emergency Operations Center.
- Public Inquiries: 1-888-246-2675.

The North Dakota Department of Health has provided and will continue to provide updated information regarding SARS via doctorsnd.com. We encourage you to periodically check your doctorsnd.com email for further information.

Please contact Tracy Miller, Epidemiology and Surveillance Program Manager, at 800.472-2180 for questions regarding this issue.

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