



THE POLIO VIRUSES LIVE ON AND ON . . .

INTERNATIONAL POST-POLIO TASK FORCE
International Centre for Post-Polio Education and Research
PostPolioInfo.com

I thought I'd repeat this 2009 release about a US man with a WEAKENED IMMUNE SYSTEM who died when he was infected by an unknown person who had been shedding the ORAL vaccine strain of poliovirus for at least nine years. POLIO KILLS IN THE U.S. - Minnesota Death Gives "Nipp It Year" New Emphasis

TUESDAY APRIL 14, 2009: THE ASSOCIATED PRESS TODAY REPORTED THE DEATH OF A PERSON INFECTED WITH THE LIVE POLIOVIRUS USED IN THE ORAL VACCINE THAT WAS DISCONTINUED IN THE U.S. NINE YEARS AGO. The health department says the patient died with polio symptoms, but it's not known to what extent polio contributed to the death. The patient also had a WEAKENED IMMUNE SYSTEM and multiple health problems. THE MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SAYS THE PATIENT MOST LIKELY BECAME INFECTED FROM SOMEONE WHO HAD RECEIVED THE LIVE-VIRUS VACCINE BEFORE ITS USE WAS STOPPED IN 2000.

"For reasons we don't understand, the live poliovirus remained inside this person for fifteen years, mutated and became virulent, then contributed to the person's death," said Dr. Richard Bruno, chairperson of the International Post-Polio Task Force. "This death is the latest sad reminder that polio may be forgotten in the U.S., but that it is far from gone." ALARMING DROPS IN POLIO VACCINATION IN US BORDER STATES AND PORTS OF ENTRY

Unfortunately, rates of polio vaccination have decreased in the US in spite of six other U.S. polio cases since 2005 -- five of them in Minnesota, where a woman with a weakened immune system harbored the poliovirus for years and infected her own children -- and in spite of polio breaking free of vaccination efforts last month in Africa, with Kenya and Uganda reporting their first polio cases and deaths in twenty years.

"The latest Centers for Disease Control data show drops in polio vaccination in twenty states and in ten large U.S. cities," said Dr. Bruno, who is also director of the International Centre for Polio Education. The CDC estimates that more than one million U.S. toddlers are unvaccinated. "Even Minnesota has had a decrease in polio vaccination, which is obviously disturbing," said Dr. Bruno. "It is frightening that states with the largest drops lie next to Mexico and Canada, across whose borders the poliovirus is believed to have been imported into the U.S. since 1997." Seventy percent of the states that border Canada had drops in polio vaccination as did Arizona, Texas and New Mexico.

CITY CHILDREN HAVE LOWEST POLIO VACCINATION RATES

Dr. Bruno is also concerned about cities that are major points of entry into the U.S. -- New York, Philadelphia, Houston and Seattle -- where drops in polio vaccination were also reported.

"Toddlers living in poverty have the lowest polio vaccination rates -- below 87% in Boston, Indianapolis, Memphis and Phoenix, and below 85% in Detroit, Houston and Seattle -- rates lower than in Western Pacific countries that include Cambodia, Mongolia and Vietnam," said Dr. Bruno. "I'm worried that those who recently had polio in the US are canaries in the mine shaft."

"NIPP IT YEAR" UNDERSCORED BY MINNESOTA DEATH

The International Post-Polio Task Force proclaimed 2008-2009 "National Immunization for Polio Prevention in Infants and Toddlers -- or 'NIPP IT' -- YEAR," to prompt parents, healthcare professionals and state health officials to ensure that all American children receive four doses of the injectable, inactivated polio vaccine by age two.

"'NIPP IT YEAR' is intended to raise awareness of the need for polio vaccination, to stop state legislatures from allowing parents to refuse vaccinations for their children because of a "philosophically objection" to vaccines, and hopefully 'nip' America's next polio epidemic in the bud," said Dr. Bruno. "The polio vaccine has been a victim of its own success. Young parents do not vaccinate because they have not experienced the devastation, death and disability caused by diseases vaccines eliminated."

Nor are people unaware that polio remains a scourge transportable from Africa, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

"With the ease of air travel, what will happen when a polio-infected individual lands in one of America's potential polio pockets, like New York City, and passes poliovirus to the estimated 24,000 infants and toddlers in that city who are not immunized?" asked Dr. Bruno "We must do more to vaccinate America's children against this deadly and disabling disease. America's next polio epidemic could be just a car or plane ride away."

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