



NOV 01 2001

TO: All Employees

FROM: Director

SUBJECT: Bioterrorism Information

Recent bioterrorism events in Florida, New York, New Jersey, and Washington, D.C., have led to widespread reports of other threats and possible exposures to anthrax. Today we learned that preliminary tests of the mailrooms of the Food and Drug Administration in the Parklawn Building, and other HHS mailrooms in the Rockville, Maryland, area have come back positive. There will be additional tests to verify the results, but that will not be available until a few days from now. We have also learned that the Bureau of Indian Affairs sent mail to their employees that had been routed through the Brentwood mail facility in Washington, D.C. That facility in the last few weeks has processed at least one letter with anthrax spores. It is also the mail facility where two employees died of anthrax.

These situations, and their tragic consequences, serve to make us more vigilant and careful as we conduct the business of the agency. While we are taking prudent precautions and have made changes in our mail handling procedures, it is important to neither minimize nor exaggerate the potential harm surrounding these bioterrorism incidents.

The possibility of second-hand infection from letters that have come in contact with an infected site is considered extremely small at this time; however, if you feel a need to be tested, you can go to any IHS facility, if you are eligible for services, or to your local doctor or health care facility.

Information about anthrax was provided to tribal leaders in a letter that was sent today. A copy is attached for your information. In addition, I am attaching a copy of the guidance that was provided to our clinical staff as well. These letters should answer many questions that you and your family may have.

For the most current information on bioterrorism, visit the CDC website at <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/>. For additional information you can contact the MS National Epidemiology Program at (505) 248-4226, or your local Tribal Epidemiology Center.

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The information is being shared with you to keep you informed, and also so that you are able to help others understand more clearly the precautions that are in place and the scope of the threat as we currently understand it. Your professionalism in providing services while we also respond to these and previous threats is noted and appreciated, particularly by those whom we serve. Thank you for all you are doing.

/Michael H. Trujillo/

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Attachments