



State of California—Health and Human Services Agency
Department of Health Services



ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER
Governor

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TO: Hospital Infection Control Practitioners / Hospital Administrators

FROM: Howard Backer, M.D., M.P.H.
Acting Chief
Immunization Branch

SUBJECT: **Reporting of Hospitalized Varicella Cases**

In November 2001, California's disease reporting regulations (Title 17, CCR, §2500) were amended to include the immediate reporting of varicella deaths as a means of improving the state's bioterrorism preparedness. Too many varicella cases continue to occur in California to make case-based surveillance for varicella feasible. It is, however, important for prevention and control efforts to characterize hospitalized varicella cases and related complications. Using rates derived from the Antelope Valley California Varicella Project, we estimate that approximately 97,000 varicella cases currently occur each year in California and that of these, approximately 230 cases are hospitalized.

We request that, all cases with a primary or secondary diagnosis of varicella and/or varicella-zoster in a hospital be reported. Hospitalized cases of varicella should be reported, by phone, FAX or E-mail to the local health department communicable disease officer during normal working hours. The disease control officer may request your assistance in collecting the surveillance data. Cases seen in out-patient settings do not need to be reported. The California Conference of Local Health Officers (CCLHO) Disease Control supports this recommendation for case-based reporting for hospitalized varicella cases.

Varicella vaccine (Varivax®) was licensed in March 1995. In 1996, ACIP recommended the routine vaccination of infants at 12 -18 months and by 2000, varicella vaccine coverage among 19 to 35 month olds in California had reached 76%. In 2001, one dose of varicella vaccine or physician documented disease became a requirement for entry into childcare and kindergarten and in 2002, 98% of children entering kindergarten had met the varicella school entry requirement.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation with this important surveillance activity. If you have any questions about this request, please contact your local health department communicable disease officer.

Enclosures: Local County Disease Control Officers Contact List

cc: Immunization Branch Field Representatives
Mark Starr, D.V.M., M.P.H., Acting Chief, Division of Communicable Disease
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