



JONATHAN E. FIELDING, M.D., M.P.H.
Director and Health Officer

JOHN F. SCHUNHOFF, Ph.D.
Chief Deputy Director

Acute Communicable Disease Control

LAURENE MASCOLA, M.D., M.P.H., Chief
313 North Figueroa Street, Room 212
Los Angeles, California 90012
TEL (213) 240-7941 • FAX (213) 482-4856

www.lapublichealth.org

July 18, 2007

Dear Physician and Laboratory Director:

West Nile virus (WNV) is now considered endemic (enzootic) vector-borne disease in California, so as in past years the Los Angeles County (LAC) Department of Public Health (DPH) will continue surveillance for WNV activity. In 2006, the cases of documented WNV infection declined compared to previous years, with 16 confirmed human cases and no associated deaths. In contrast, in 2005 and 2004, 43 and 307 human cases (including 14 deaths) of WNV infections were confirmed in LAC, in respective years. The first human WNV case in 2006 occurred in early July, but given this winter and spring's relatively dry weather, it is difficult to predict when the first cases of WNV infection will be detected in 2007. Already, there are indications of non-human WNV activity with WNV-positive dead birds and mosquito pools being detected within LAC and throughout the state.

West Nile fever, WNV neuroinvasive disease, and asymptomatic positive blood donors are reportable to the DPH. Case information helps guide DPH and the five mosquito abatement districts within LAC to provide targeted mosquito abatement services and health education via the mass media and community based organizations to communities at particularly high risk.

State regulations and DPH require physicians and laboratories to report all positive laboratory findings of WNV to the DPH within one (1) working day. We remind clinicians and infection control professionals that all cases of acute encephalitis and meningitis (including those with viral, bacterial, fungal, or parasitic etiologies) remain reportable under the current California Code of Regulations section 2500 to the DPH within one working day by telephone.

A standard Confidential Morbidity Report (CMR) can be used to file a report; the CMR may be faxed to the DPH Morbidity Unit at (888) 397-3778. You may also telephone in the case report during normal business hours to (888) 397-3993.

Specimens positive for acute WNV infection in commercial labs do not require confirmation by the Los Angeles County Public Health Laboratory (PHL) to meet the WNV case definition. Excellent correlation has been repeatedly found between tests performed at commercial labs and subsequent confirmation in Public Health reference laboratories. Acute Communicable Disease Control Program (ACDC) recommends that patients not have WNV screening tests performed unless they have the following signs or symptoms: aseptic meningitis, encephalitis, acute flaccid paralysis, or headache, fever, muscle pain and rash lasting more than three days (a syndrome referred to as West Nile fever).



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Gloria Molina
First District

Yvonne B. Burke
Second District

Zev Yaroslavsky
Third District

Don Knabe
Fourth District

Michael D. Antonovich
Fifth District

Physician and Laboratory Director
July 18, 2007
Page 2

The PHL remains available for initial specimen testing and confirmation of ambiguous results. We have enclosed the WNV, PHL submittal form that contains instructions on specimen handling. A standard lab slip with physician and patient contact information must accompany the specimen(s). The PHL will accept serum specimens on out-patients with possible West Nile fever whose symptoms last at least three days and who is clinically diagnosed by a medical provider. Cerebrospinal fluid and serum samples can be submitted for WNV testing for patients hospitalized or evaluated in an emergency department or other health care setting for aseptic meningitis, encephalitis, or acute flaccid paralysis syndrome (atypical Guillain-Barré syndrome). Prior approval from ACDC physicians is not required for clinically compatible WNV fever or NID cases.

The DPH will continue to provide updated surveillance data to the medical community as information becomes available. The Department looks forward to working with clinicians and laboratories in our surveillance efforts for WNV.

For more information on WNV and other public health issues, please consult the LAC Public Health web site at www.lapublichealth.org. For medical consultation regarding WNV disease in humans, WNV prevention, surveillance activities, and test interpretation, contact ACDC at (213) 240-7941. Critical after-hours consultation is available through the county emergency operator at (213) 974-1234.

Sincerely,



Laurene Mascola, M.D., M.P.H., F.A.A.P.
Chief, Acute Communicable Diseases Control Program

LM:RC:eb

C:\Letter\PhysicianandLaboratoryDirector-RC2007-008

Attachment

c: Rachel Civen, M.D., M.P.H.

WEST NILE VIRUS PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORY SUBMITTAL FORM

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SENDING SPECIMENS

1. Require specimens

- Acute Serum:** ≥ 2cc serum
- Cerebral Spinal Fluid (CSF):** 1-2 cc CSF if lumbar puncture is performed

If West Nile virus is highly suspected and acute serum is negative or inconclusive:

- 2nd Serum:** ≥ 2cc serum collected 3-5 days after acute serum

2. Specimen handling

- Refrigerate** serum specimens.
- Store cerebral spinal fluid (CSF) **frozen**.
- Each specimen should be labeled with patient name, date of collection, and specimen type.

3. Requested testing -- check all apply:

- Serum - WNV Antibody
- CSF – WNV Antibody
- CSF – Enterovirus by PCR
- CSF – Herpes simplex virus (HSV) by PCR
- CSF – Viral Culture

Specimens should be sent on cold pack using an overnight courier to:

**Los Angeles County Public Health Laboratory, Serology Section
12750 Erickson Ave., Downey, CA 90242
(562) 658-1303**

**** IMPORTANT: THE INFORMATION BELOW MUST BE COMPLETED AND SUBMITTED WITH SPECIMENS ****

Patient's last name, first name:			Patient Information		
Age <u>or</u> DOB:			Address _____		
Sex (circle): M F		Onset date:	City _____ Zip _____ County _____		
Clinical findings: <input type="radio"/> Encephalitis <input type="radio"/> Meningitis <input type="radio"/> Acute flaccid paralysis <input type="radio"/> Febrile illness <input type="radio"/> Other: _____			Phone Number (_____) _____		
Other tests requested:			Other information (immunocompromised, travel hx, hx of flavivirus infection, etc.):		
			This section for Laboratory use only Date received and Accession Number		
1 st	Specimen type and/or specimen source	Date collected	1 st		
2 nd	Specimen type and/or specimen source	Date Collected	2 nd		
3 rd	Specimen type and/or specimen source	Date Collected	3 rd		

Submitting Physician _____ Phone Number (_____) _____

Submitting Facility _____ Phone Number (_____) _____

Questions concerning WNV? Call Acute Communicable Disease Control Program at (213) 240-7941
Los Angeles County Department of Public Health
Acute Communicable Disease Control Program