

## COMMUNITY-ACQUIRED OUTBREAKS

### ABSTRACT

Settings of community outbreaks in Los Angeles County (LAC) include schools, day care centers, private homes, restaurants and group homes. In 1999, a total 185 community outbreaks were investigated, compared to 168 in 1998. Foodborne outbreaks (n=39) are analyzed separately due to their unique epidemiology and investigational procedures. The remaining 146 community outbreaks, consisting of 1,516 illnesses, are analyzed here.

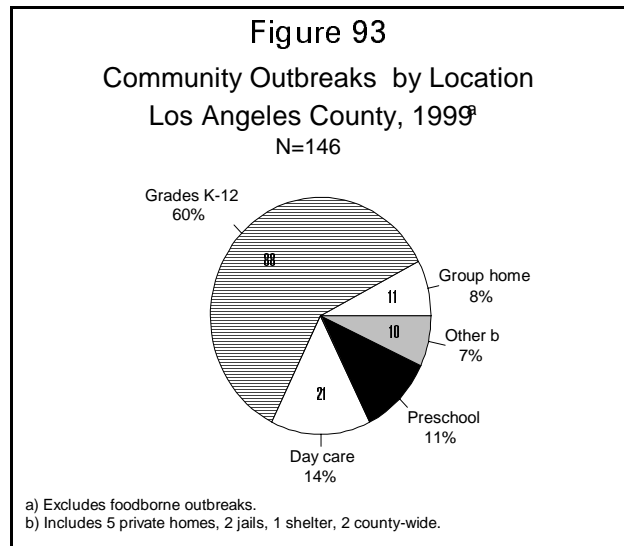
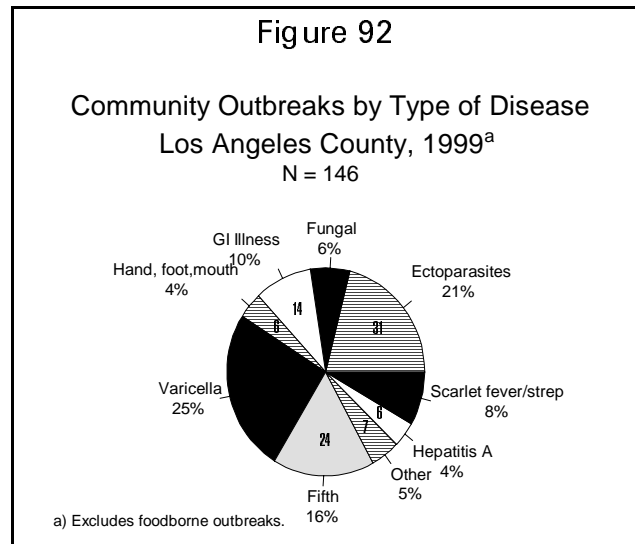
### DATA

Disease outbreaks are defined as clusters of disease cases that occur in a similar time or place, or unusual numbers of cases above baseline in a specified area. Depending on the nature of the outbreak, investigation responsibility is held by either district health offices or by the Acute Communicable Disease Control Unit (ACDC). ACDC provides consultation for district-led outbreak investigations.

Most of the reported community outbreaks in LAC were due to varicella (25%), and ectoparasites (21%) (scabies and pediculosis) (Figure 92). This year, fifth disease and scarlet fever/streptococcal pharyngitis, received their own outbreak categories.

The Pomona District reported the most outbreaks, followed by Foothill, West and Torrance Districts.

Pediculosis and gastroenteritis (GE) of undetermined etiology (generally defined as viral, non-laboratory confirmed) were the diseases with the highest number of cases overall. GE illnesses of undetermined etiology had the highest number of cases per outbreak (Table 10), followed by pediculosis.



**Table 10. Community Outbreaks  
by Disease, Los Angeles County, 1999<sup>a</sup>**

<b>Disease</b>	<b>Number of Outbreaks</b>	<b>Number of Cases</b>	<b>Avg. Cases per Outbreak</b>	<b>Range Low-High</b>
Pediculosis	23	261	11	2-41
Scabies	8	74	9	2-27
Varicella	37	367	10	2-38
Hand, foot & mouth disease	6	28	5	2-9
Fungal diseases	9	39	4	2-9
GI illness - Viral GE <sup>b</sup>	5	221	44	10-98
GI illness - known etiology	9	80	9	2-27
<i>Salmonella</i> Heidelberg	1	6		
<i>Salmonella</i> Paratyphi	1	7		
<i>Salmonella</i> Stanley	1	4		
<i>Salmonella</i> Typhimurium	1	5		
<i>Shigella</i> species undetermined	1	22		
<i>Shigella flexneri</i>	1	11		
<i>Shigella sonnei</i>	3	25		
Fifth disease	24	196	8	2-21
Hepatitis A	6	30	5	2-12
Scarlet Fever/Strepto. pharyngitis	12	60	5	2-13
Other <sup>c</sup>	7	160	23	2-70
<b>Total</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>1,516</b>		

a) Excludes food-borne outbreaks.

b) Not laboratory confirmed.

c) Includes: impetigo, pertussis, non-specific upper respiratory tract illness, rash of unknown etiology, and influenza.

**Table 11. Community Outbreaks, Disease by Setting  
Los Angeles County, 1999**

<b>Disease</b>	<b>Group Home</b>	<b>Day care</b>	<b>School<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Pre School</b>	<b>Other<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Pediculosis	1	1	19	2	0	<b>23</b>
Scabies	3	2	1	1	1	<b>8</b>
Varicella	1	8	28	0	0	<b>37</b>
Hand, foot & mouth disease	0	3	1	2	0	<b>6</b>
Fungal diseases	1	1	5	2	0	<b>9</b>
GI illness - Viral GE <sup>c</sup>	2	0	2	0	1	<b>5</b>
GI illness - known etiology	0	1	0	5	3	<b>9</b>
Fifth disease	0	4	19	1	0	<b>24</b>
Hepatitis A	0	0	3	0	3	<b>6</b>
Scarlet	1	1	8	2	0	<b>12</b>
Fever/Strepto.pharyngitis						
Other	2	0	2	1	2	<b>7</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>146</b>

a) Includes: senior high schools, junior high schools and elementary schools.

b) Includes: private homes, jail, shelter, and county-wide.

c) Not laboratory confirmed.

The distribution of outbreaks by location is shown in Figure 93. The most common setting for outbreaks were schools (including elementary, junior and senior high schools), preschools, and day care centers. Of the schools, only one senior high school, one junior high school and one junior high/elementary school reported outbreaks. The rest of the school-related outbreaks were reported from elementary schools. Further analysis shows that specific diseases cluster in these sites. The majority of pediculosis, chicken pox and fifth disease outbreaks occurred in schools.

## COMMENTS

In 1999, there were more reported community outbreaks compared to 1998 in LA. Of these outbreaks, varicella infections were the most often reported. Elementary schools, day care centers and preschools were the most common sites for reported outbreaks. There were substantially more outbreaks of fifth disease reported in 1999, therefore it was given its own category.