

News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Clark County Health District postpones smallpox vaccination clinics

(Las Vegas, Nev., - March 31, 2003) – The Clark County Health District will postpone vaccinations for public health workers until more information regarding the possible link of heart disease to complications from the vaccination becomes available.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has added a temporary medical deferral to the vaccination program for persons who have been diagnosed with heart disease. They are currently investigating whether there is an association between the immunization and reports of heart problems in seven health care workers.

The medical deferral for the vaccination includes heart conditions such as: a previous heart attack, angina (chest pain caused by lack of blood flow to the heart), congestive heart failure and cardiomyopathy (an enlarged heart). The CDC has indicated that these temporary exclusions may change or be enhanced as more information is gathered.

“In light of these new developments we felt the most prudent course of action would be to delay implementing the vaccination program until more information is available,” said Dr. Donald Kwalick, chief health officer for the health district.

Dr. Kwalick stressed that the health district continues to prepare for the possibility of bioterrorism and disease outbreaks of any type.

“The important thing to remember with a disease like smallpox is that a person can be effectively immunized after exposure. We have plans in place that would allow us to mobilize and prepare our staff to respond to an outbreak. This temporary delay in vaccinating public health workers will not significantly impact on our ability to respond to an incident,” said Kwalick.

The Clark County Health District is continuing with training programs for employees and health care workers from other institutions in order to be prepared once the smallpox vaccination program is resumed.

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