



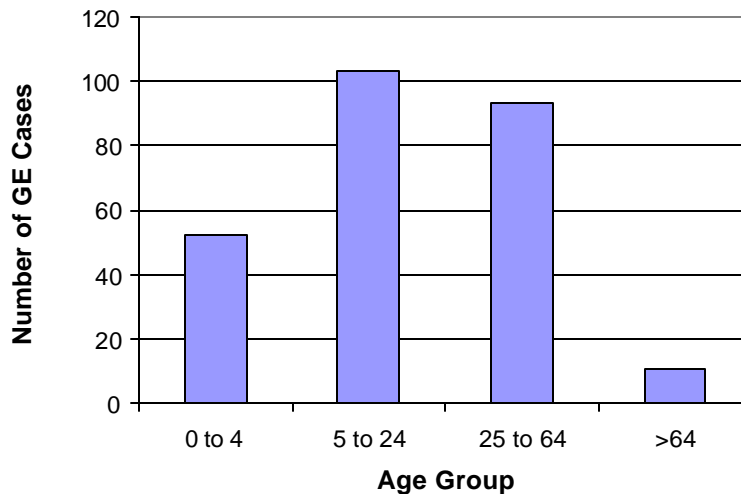
Office of Epidemiology
Gastroenteritis Surveillance Program

Date: June 2, 2000
To: Health Care Providers
From: Patricia Rowley, BS, Surveillance Coordinator
Subject: Report for week ending May 21, 2000 (Week 20).

The Clark County Health District Gastroenteritis Surveillance Program began data collection on May 15, 2000 (week 20). This is an ongoing program and is open to new participants. Health care providers wishing to participate as sentinel sites for the surveillance program should contact Patricia Rowley, Surveillance Coordinator, at (702) 383-1378.

Twenty-seven sentinel sites reported during week 20 (May 15-20). A total of 259 cases of gastroenteritis (GE), were reported, which is 2.5% of the 10,535 patients seen that week. Persons experiencing diarrhea or vomiting not explained by a chronic condition were counted as cases. Figure 1 shows the distribution of cases by age.

Week 20 Clark County GE cases



As a result of prompt reporting during the first week of surveillance, an outbreak of gastroenteritis was identified at a school. A total of 31 cases, primarily experiencing vomiting, were identified. The epidemiologic pattern was consistent with viral GE and did not appear to be food-related.

Clark County was involved in two recent multi-state outbreak outbreaks of salmonellosis. The first, an outbreak of *Salmonella enteritidis*, was associated with unpasteurized orange juice. Although there were only two lab-confirmed cases associated with this outbreak in Clark County, it is likely there were other unidentified cases since the juice was widely distributed. The second outbreak was associated with cantaloupe (serotype *poona*). Three lab-confirmed cases in Clark County were associated with the

second outbreak. This is the second time in the past decade that *Salmonella poona* has been associated with cantaloupe consumption.

Laboratory testing of stool specimens from patients with diarrheal illnesses is essential in identifying foodborne outbreaks. Serotyping and Pulse Field Gel Electrophoresis (PFGE) from stool cultures were critical in linking cases from several states during the investigation of the outbreaks discussed above.

In addition, laboratory testing prior to prescribing antibiotic therapy for patients with diarrheal illness has important implications. An article in the June 29th issue of New England Journal of Medicine provides evidence that antibiotic treatment of children with *E. coli* 0157:H7 infection increases the risk of hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS). The relative risk of HUS after antibiotic treatment was 14.3 (95% CI 2.9-70.7) in this prospective study of 71 children infected with *E. coli* 0157:H7. Of the children who developed HUS, some had been treated with trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole and others with cephalosporins.

The Food and Drug Administration has issued a nationwide recall of a pet treat due to possible contamination with *Salmonella*. The recalled product is Medalist brand pig ear pet treats with lot numbers of 07600EXU3 and 08300EXU1. Pet owners can become ill by handling the pet treats and then touching their mouth or food without first washing their hands. Pets that consume the treats can shed the bacteria in their feces.

If you have any questions regarding the gastroenteritis surveillance program, please call Patricia Rowley at (702) 383-1378. Patients with suspected foodborne illness should be referred to the Clark County Health District, Office of Epidemiology to report their illness. The Office of Epidemiology can be reached Monday through Friday, 8:00am to 4:30pm. After hours and weekends, call (702) 385-1291.