

Anthrax and other agents of Bio-terrorism

(October 15, 2001)

The Calgary Health Region is working closely with the City of Calgary Police, Fire and Emergency Services in response to packages of concern or suspicion. The Calgary City Police is the lead agency to respond to calls from the public about suspicious packages or letters. If patients contact your office for information about what to do please refer them to 911. (If they bring suspicious materials into your office they should be enclosed in a sealed plastic bag if this can be done without anyone else being exposed. The CHR is working closely with the City to get the message to the public that such packages should not be transported to other sites.) The Hazard Materials Response Team is also involved in containing and decontamination if there is concern about a spill. Any exposures of individuals are evaluated through the Medical Officer of Health to determine what if any further testing is required.

There have not been any cases of anthrax in Canada linked to packages of concern, nor has any testing of the materials involved in the incidents in Canada identified any biologic agent as of October 15.

Information from the US indicates that physicians are often approached with requests for prescriptions for antibiotics. There is no indication in Calgary or Canada for the prescription of prophylactic antibiotics nor is there an indication for vaccination against anthrax or other biologic agents.

The following web sites provide further information including handouts that can be shared with your patients:

Health Canada: Biological Agents - Frequently Asked Questions

(Added link November 21, 2001)

http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english/biological_agents/index.html

CMA Statement Concerning Mental Health Issues:

<http://www.cma.ca/cmhsn/anthrax.htm>

AMA Statement Concerning Prescribing Prophylactic Antibiotics

<http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/6383.html>

If you have questions or comments about the contents of this publication, please contact:

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