



Early warning of enterovirus type 71---Virus Weekly Report 18, 2004

Auckland and ESR Virology Laboratories have isolated and identified enterovirus type 71 (EV 71) infections from 5 patients from the Auckland region. The index case was a 35-month-old girl presenting with respiratory-like illness. Patients ranged in age from 3 to 32 years (median 9 years). Specimens were collected in January (1), March (3) and April (1). Patients presented mainly hand-foot-mouth disease.

Hand-foot-mouth disease is generally a mild form of viral disease caused by Coxsackie A16, A4, A5, A9, A10, B2, B5 and EV 71. EV71 can also cause mild respiratory illness, as well as potentially life threatening illnesses such as aseptic meningitis, encephalitis, and acute flaccid paralysis. EV 71 is transmitted by faecal-oral contamination and less commonly via respiratory droplets and has the potential to cause outbreaks or epidemics. EV 71 infection is relatively uncommon in Europe, North America, and Australasia. Since 1997 there has been a significant increase in EV 71 epidemic activity in the Asia-Pacific region, often associated with severe encephalitis and high mortality. EV 71 is relatively rare in New Zealand (Figure 1). However, EV 71 infection has been detected more frequently since 1998 with one medium-size outbreak (12 cases) reported in 2001 (See Lablink 2001, 8(3):32). The most recent global report of EV71 was from ProMED Digest V2004 #169 on 28 April 2004. Hong Kong Department of Health confirmed a case of EV 71 infection from a 2-year-old boy, who became ill on 10 Apr 2004 with fever and rash over hands and mouth. He was admitted to Queen Elizabeth Hospital on 14 Apr, discharged on 15 Apr, and recovered. He had not travelled recently.

It is important that doctors are aware of the current EV-71 infection in New Zealand and inform the community the following control measures in prevention of the disease: wash hands after going to toilet and changing nappies and before eating; cover mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing; clean thoroughly toys or utensils which may be contaminated by nasal or oral secretions. Parents should seek medical advice if their children develop symptoms of hand-foot-mouth disease. Children suffering from the infection should stay at home while they are unwell and avoid close contact with other children.

Laboratory confirmed EV71 cases, 1974-2004April

