

County offers shots to halt hepatitis

BY PAT MURPHY
STAFF WRITER

Health officials are hoping free immunization shots will cut down on the number of people affected by the "secondary cases" of the hepatitis A outbreak expected as early as next week.

"Secondary cases" refers to people already exposed to the hepatitis A virus, but not yet experiencing fever, abdominal pain, nausea or other symptoms associated with the disease.

"We don't expect the secondary cases to be real intense," said Dr. Carolyn W. Bird, chief of medical services for Oakland County. "But there will be some, although probably not as many as the initial outbreak."

"We're hoping the Immune Globulin (IG) will minimize the effects," said the physician.

IG shots were initiated last week in Walled Lake, Southfield and Pontiac after officials realized an outbreak had occurred four to six weeks ago, said Bird.

As of Tuesday, 125 shots had been administered, mostly to people close to known cases.

was Esther Gold, a Farmington Hills resident whose husband, Martin, spent five days in Sinai Hospital in Detroit where he was diagnosed as having hepatitis A. Also getting the shots were their three children, some relatives and a few neighbors.

Like some other hepatitis A cases, the Golds had frequented restaurants or stores in West Bloomfield, the area health officials have identified as the "focal point" of the outbreak.

Like county officials, Gold declined to identify any specific restaurant or food store as a possible source. He said he did not hesitate to go back to West Bloomfield because he is confident the outbreak has been identified and contained.

Gold started experiencing symptoms on Labor Day weekend. When his "flow began fever," ranging between 99 and 100.8 degrees — didn't subside four days later, he went to his family physician who subsequently advised him to go to the hospital.

The experience was "scary" at first, Gold said, because physicians didn't immediately recognize the problem. It was a relief, he continued, once he was diag-

nosed with hepatitis A, the least serious form of the infection that affects the liver.

Hepatitis A is seldom fatal, and symptoms of the flu-like illness can normally be treated.

Gold, the owner of S-G Imported Car Parts, had hoped to return to work shortly after his release from the hospital. "But I just got tired," he said, "I'll probably go back next week."

Gold's experience was typical, according to county health officials who say many cases don't get recognized or reported because the symptoms are often associated with the flu or other problems.

Symptoms vary, according to health officials. While some people — especially children — might have no symptoms, others can become severely ill. Early symptoms include loss of appetite. Later symptoms include dark colored urine, light colored stools and jaundice, or a yellow color to the skin and eyes.

In conjunction with other health problems, however, hepatitis A can cause serious problems. The lone fatality linked to the outbreak was a 67-year-old

man who was hospitalized at William Beaumont Hospital with other health problems.

The best way to guard against getting the infection, health officials note, is to practice good health habits, especially thoroughly washing your hands before eating and after using the toilet.

While county health officials decline to identify a possible source of the outbreak, they confirm that West Bloomfield is still the "focal point" of their efforts.

Bird said there is no real rush to identify the likely source because she and other health officials believe the outbreak has been identified and contained.

"A number of possibilities continue to be explored as the source of the outbreak," according to a county health department press release Tuesday. "All newly reported cases are being interviewed and public health officials will do an in-depth case control study. It is expected that this study will take several weeks to conduct and analyze."

The county has established a hot line residents can use to get additional information about the virus or the IG shots. It is (800) 223-0179.

The number to report a new case or contact is (248) 858-1286.

Career center sets open house

Adults considering a career change or re-entering the job market can receive free computer-assisted guidance and counseling at the Oakland University Adult Career Counseling Center. An open house is scheduled from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 12, at the center.

Computer programs are used in combination with individual counseling to aid clients in self-analysis of their interests, values, abilities and experiences. Advisors help clients identify education and training programs, develop their resumes and enhance interviewing skills.

Descriptions of careers, including salary ranges, training and educational requirements are

also available through the ACCC.

The center is open Monday through Saturday. Interested adults are invited to call (248) 370-3092 to set up an appointment. It is located on the lower level of O'Dowd Hall, Room 123.

Since the opening of the ACCC in 1983, more than 11,000 people have been assisted in career exploration and planning.

Dr. Jane Goodman, ACCC director, is a professional in the OU School of Educational and Human Services. Graduate assistant career advisors include Michele Cunningham of Rochester, Kimberly Flowers of Detroit, Kim Shultz of Troy and Jo-Jean Zimmer of Port Huron.

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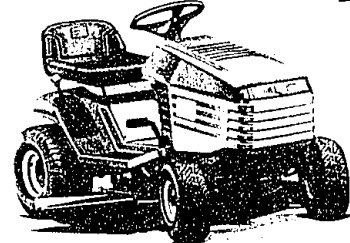
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