

Disease can be treated

BY WILLIAM COVANT
STAFF WRITER

Health experts believe the recent outbreak of Legionnaires' Disease in the Farmington and Farmington Hills was due to a bacteria spreading from condensation in a cooling tower of an air conditioning unit.

The disease is an acute form of pneumonia produced by bacteria that derives its name from a highly publicized disease that killed 29 of 182 victims at an American Legion convention in Philadelphia in July 1976.

The disease usually occurs in late summer or early fall and is transmitted through the air, not from person to person.

It afflicts men more than women and is more likely to affect:

- Middle-aged and elderly people.
- People with a chronic underlying disease, such as diabetes, chronic kidney failure, or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.
- Alcoholics.
- Cigarette smokers.

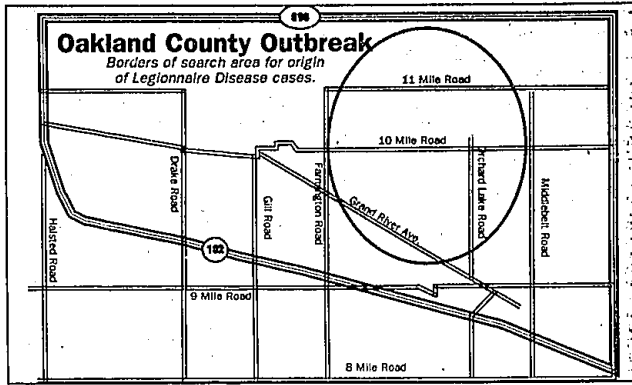
Symptoms follow a 2-10 day incubation period. They include diarrhea, loss of appetite, widespread muscle pain and generalized weakness, headache, recurrent chills and an unremitting fever that develops within 12-48 hours and may reach 105 degrees Fahrenheit. Nausea,

vomiting, disorientation, mental sluggishness, confusion, mild temporary amnesia, chest pain, rapid breathing, shortness of breath and in many cases a slow heart rate are other symptoms.

Under a doctor's care, a person can be treated and recover completely. An antibiotic treatment is recommended.

Bridget Gosin, Botsford Hospital's community relations manager, said there have been a lot of calls since the public became aware of the outbreak. "We've been getting a lot of calls about what to expect, the curious and some of general concern," she said. "We're asking them to call the Oakland County Health Department."

People can call 810-858-1276.



Outbreak from page A1

was treated and released for Legionnaires from Wm. Beaumont Hospital.

Those who have died are: Marion Dernberger, 74, of Farmington; and Barbara McConeghy, 76, of Farmington Hills.

Farmington Hills Assistant City Manager Dave Call said he and his staff first learned of the problem after the health department tried to contact City Building Official Tom Williams about roof top air conditioning units in the city.

City Manager Daniel Hobbs,

Call, Farmington City Manager Frank Lauhoff, Farmington Mayor Jo Ann McShane, Hills Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi, Hills Police Chief Bill Dwyer, Farmington Public Safety Director Gary Goss and three officials from the health department, including Dr. Bird, met in an emergency session Thursday night at 10.

On Friday, Lauhoff was one of those who joined health officials flying over the area by helicopter to identify the possible origin of the outbreak.

They looked for roof-top cooling towers and air conditioning systems, which are places where bacteria causing Legionnaires' can emanate.

Some 20 to 30 sites were identified and water samples were to be taken Saturday, Lauhoff said.

"It's anybody's best guess if the source of this,"

Dr. William Hall, chief of the communicable disease and epidemiology division for the Michigan Department Public Health in Lansing, said the type of air-

conditioning units are likely to be found in a business or large commercial operation.

Investigators were looking for a common thread among those diagnosed with the disease.

While trying to trace the source, city and health officials were also fusing panic.

All emphasized that the disease is not contagious through human contact and is transmitted through the air. The water system is safe, Lauhoff said.

"The chlorine kills it," Lauhoff said. "Water distribution, hot

water tanks ... these are no issues. It has to be standing water."

Of the 14 cases, most were admitted between Oct. 1-8 and all of them live, work or have a significant connection to the (six square mile area), Hall said.

"Most of the victims have been over 60," Hall said. "Legionnaires' Disease attacks those with diminished disease fighting ability. Smokers and men appear to be other risk groups."

Hall said the exposure probably took place on the weekend of

Sept. 28-29, although that would not explain the case of the woman admitted on Sept. 17.

"Usually the exposure is limited to a period of several hours, when all the unusual things come together," he said.

Hall said the warm weather on Oct. 1-2, could have been the reason for turning on air conditioning, which would have exposed those people to the deadly disease.

Staff writer Larry O'Connor contributed to this story.

Cigars from page A1

"It's open to everyone," said Maria Esposito, Chamber vice-president. "Most Chamber programs are during the day, in a much more businesslike atmosphere. This is sitting down, eating, socializing in a very elegant atmosphere with unusual surroundings."

For \$75, the evening features a four-course dinner, a package of five Macanudo cigars, a lighter and cigar cutter, presentations from industry people, and a jazz group. Representa-

tives from Courvasser will also be there, offering tastings of cigar-complementing cognac and brandy.

"Number two, it's the trend lately," said Ara Topouzian, owner of The Sound of Books in Farmington Hills and event chairman. "Everybody's jumping on the bandwagon. A lot of businessmen and women now smoke cigars."

"Number two, it's an excellent networking tool. All these meetings are the same; 'We're going

to breakfast, to lunch, blah blah blah.' Here, we're bringing cigar lovers together."

A cigar smoker for years, Topouzian acknowledges that the evening is not for everyone. "On one hand it's a very popular thing, but to someone who doesn't smoke, it's not enlightening."

Of the event, the American Cancer Society in Southfield issued a statement. "It is the Mission of the American Cancer Society to inform the public regarding issues regarding all types of tobacco and how it relates to cancer," it reads.

Since everyone seems to understand the risks, what is the appeal?

"Truthfully," it is extremely relaxing," said Irv Pilnick, an employee of Smokers Only on Middlebelt. "Anybody who buys them, I tell them, it's not like a cigarette. You don't inhale. And there is a tremendous variety."

Usually associated with grandfathers and uncles, cigars are now being enjoyed by women in greater numbers. To register, call the chamber at (810) 474-3440. Cocktails will be at 6 p.m., with the dinner to begin at 7 p.m.

Recovery from page A1

pneumonia and a fever reaching 105.7 degrees.

When doctors diagnosed Wallace as having the disease Oct. 11, Marion was struck with fear.

"At that point, I thought it was fatal," she said. "I know of the case 20 years ago in Philadelphia ... Then the doctor proceeded to say that it is not fatal now because they have an antibiotic to take care of it."

Wallace is being treated with the antibiotic Erythromycin. On Saturday, he was outside feeding the goldfish in a backyard pond.

He still feels tired and weak. "I wear out awfully fast," he said. "I'm on the mend, though."

He attributes his recovery to a healthy lifestyle and prayer. He is an elder at the Church of Jesus Christ Restoration in Garden City.

"I give the Lord a lot of credit," he said.

Health officials have asked the Wallaces to retrace their steps the weekend of Sept. 27-29 to pinpoint the possible. They went to Damman Hardware, a Chinese restaurant and Eastern Market in Detroit.

"I'm not going to stop going to Damman Hardware," Marion said. "This is our locale."

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