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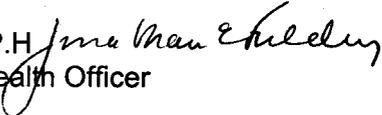
FRED LEAF
Chief Operating Officer

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES
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March 24, 2003

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Thomas L. Garthwaite, M.D. 
Director of Health Services and Chief Medical Officer

Jonathan E. Fielding, M.D., M.P.H. 
Director of Public Health and Health Officer

SUBJECT: **BI-WEEKLY UPDATE ON MRSA IN JAIL AND MSM**

On February 11, 2003 your Board requested that the Department of Health Services provide an update on the methicillin resistant staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) and syphilis outbreaks, including the provision of information about MRSA at all newborn facilities and the County's Jail Intake Center. This is to provide an update to the report of March 5, 2003.

Update on MRSA in the Los Angeles County Jail

There were a total of 76 new cases of wound infections in February reported in inmates at the Los Angeles County Jail. No deaths were reported.

Staff from Public Health gave an update of the MRSA situation to the medical staff at the Jail on March 3, 2003. Appropriate treatment recommendations were emphasized. The Public Health-Jail MRSA Task Force met on March 10 to review progress made in implementing the Public Health recommendations for the control of MRSA in each facility. Progress is being made on access to hygienic supplies (soap) and appropriate medical care, screening for skin infections on admission to the Jail, and staff and inmate education. Correctional staff are developing strategies to increase access to clean laundry. Public Health is working with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Jail on the feasibility of an intervention with chlorhexidine, an antibacterial soap. The details and cost estimate of this intervention are being developed.

Public Health continues to monitor the number of skin infections each month and provides ongoing consultations with staff from the Jail.

Risk Factors for MRSA Infections Among Men Who Have Sex with Men (MSM).

Laboratory surveillance in one infectious diseases clinic through February 2003 show that wound cultures positive for MRSA (including men, women, HIV+, HIV-) are continuing to be identified at a level higher than usual. However, physicians at this clinic are increasing the number of patients they culture so this might falsely elevate estimates of MRSA.

Public Health continues to recruit and interview patients into a case-control study that is investigating the risk factors for MRSA skin infections among MSM. Information on risk factors is important to help understand what prevention and control measure might be necessary. Of 37 case-patients enrolled into the study, 25 have been interviewed. Of 45 controls enrolled, 22 have been interviewed. The Office of Health Assessment & Epidemiology, the Office of HIV/AIDS Epidemiology, and the Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) Control Program are involved in administering surveys. Entry of interview and chart abstraction data has begun, and preliminary results are expected next week.

Syphilis and MRSA Among MSM

STD Program staff met with owners of bathhouses and sex clubs in early March to discuss issues of both MRS and syphilis. Senior Public Health managers will attend the next meeting in early April. An intradepartmental group convened on March 19 to explore new approaches to prevention of HIV, syphilis and MRSA. This group will continue to meet regularly.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please let either of us know.

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c: Chief Administrative Officer
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors