PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

Health Information Update

Quarterly Public Health Information Update

This document contains hyperlinks and can be accessed on our Health Bulletin webpage (https://kernpublichealth.com/health-bulletin/)

April 11, 2023

Dear Kern County Healthcare Provider:

This quarterly letter is being sent to call your attention to important health updates in Kern County.

Increase in Reported Kaposi Sarcoma Cases in Kern County

Kern County Public Health Services Department (KCPHSD) has received reports of an increase in the incidence of Kaposi Sarcoma (KS) cases in Kern County. Kaposi Sarcoma is a type of cancer caused from an infection by human herpesvirus 8 (HHV-8). While neither of these conditions are reportable to the public health department by regulation, local providers have indicated they have identified two KS cases and are investigating a third probable case since the month of January. These providers indicated they have not identified a case of KS in Kern County for more than 10 years and were reporting these cases as an Occurrence of Any Unusual Disease.

HHV-8 generally causes no symptoms to those who are infected; however, those with weakened immune systems are more vulnerable to developing KS from an HHV-8 infection. Patients with HIV/AIDS are those at highest risk for developing KS. KS forms in the lining of blood and lymph vessels. The lesions associated with KS typically appear as purplish spots on the legs, feet, or face. They can also develop in the genital area, mouth, or lymph nodes. In severe cases, lesions may develop in the digestive tract and lungs. Lesions are typically painless. Healthcare providers should be aware of these potential diagnoses especially among those at risk. Providers with any questions may contact the Kern County Public Health Department at 661-321-3000.

Outbreak of Drug-resistant *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* Associated with Artificial Tears

On February 1, 2023, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued a Health Alert Network (HAN) Health Advisory about infections with an extensively drug-resistant strain of Verona Integron-mediated Metallo-β-lactamase (VIM) and Guiana-Extended Spectrum-β-Lactamase (GES)-producing carbapenem-resistant *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* (VIM-GES-CRPA) in 12 states. As of March 14, 2023, there have been 68 patients identified in 16 states, including California. Thirty-seven patients have been linked to four healthcare facility clusters. There have been reports of 3 deaths, 8 patients with vision loss, and 4 reports of enucleation. Isolates have been identified from clinical cultures of sputum or bronchia wash, cornea, urine, blood, rectal swabs, and other nonsterile sources. Dates of specimen collection have ranged from May 2022 to February 2023. Most patients have reported using artificial tears, including more than 10 different brands. The most commonly reported brand has been EzriCare Artificial Tears. Laboratory testing has identified CIM-GES-CRPA in opened bottles of EzriCare Artificial Tears from patients who had eye infections and those who did not.

One February 2, 2023, the U.S. Federal Drug Administration (FDA) posted the voluntary recall of the product Artificial Tears Lubricant Eye drops distributed by EzriCare LLC and Delsam Pharma. On February 24, 2023, FDA posted the recall notice of an additional batches of product.

Recommendations for Healthcare Providers and Healthcare Facilities:

- Immediately discontinue the use of EzriCare or Delsam Pharma's Artificial Tears
- Instruct patients who are currently using these products to stop use pending further guidance from the CDC and FDA.
  - Assess patients for alternate treatment options and advise accordingly.
- Advise patients who have already received or used these products to monitor for signs and symptoms of infection.
- Patients who develop clinically compatible illness should be tested for VIM-GES-CRPA through culture and susceptibility testing. At this time, there is no recommendation for testing of patients who have used this product and who are not experiencing any signs or symptoms of infection.
- Patients being treated for keratitis or endophthalmitis should be queried to determine if the patient has used EzriCare or Delsam Pharma Artificial Tears or other eyedrops.
- Symptoms may include the following:
  - Yellow, green, or clear discharge from the eye
  - Eye pain or discomfort
  - Redness of the eye or eyelid
  - Feeling of something in your eye (foreign body sensation)
  - Increased sensitivity to light
  - Blurry vision

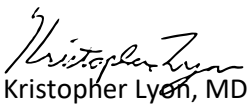
Recommendations for Clinical Laboratories:

- All *P. aeruginosa* specimens resistant to imipenem or meropenem should undergo carbapenem resistance mechanism testing. Laboratories without capacity to perform carbapenem resistance mechanism testing can contact the Kern County Public Health Services Department at 661-321-3000 to request mechanism testing.

The investigation is ongoing and updates can be found on CDC's Outbreak of Extensively Drug-resistant *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* Associated with Artificial Tears webpage.

If you have any questions, please contact KCPHSD by phone at 661-321-3000, via email at publichealth@kerncounty.com, or visit the KCPHSD website.

Thank you,



Kristopher Lyon, MD
Health Officer