

A report from the Communicable Diseases Network Australia, January to March 2004

The Communicable Diseases Network Australia (CDNA) consists of communicable disease units from state and territory health departments and the Australian Government, and expert bodies and individuals in the specific areas of communicable disease epidemiology, clinical management, disease control and laboratory diagnosis. The CDNA provides national public health leadership and co-ordination on communicable disease surveillance, prevention and control, and offers strategic advice to governments and other key bodies on public health actions to minimise the impact of communicable diseases in Australia and the region.

Surveillance case definitions

CDNA has for some time been revising the 1994 National Health and Medical Research Centre's (NHMRC) document *Surveillance Case Definitions* and developing standard surveillance case definitions for the many new national notifiable diseases. From 1 January 2004, the *Interim Surveillance Case Definitions for the National Notifiable Disease Surveillance System (NNDSS)* have been available from <http://www.cda.gov.au/surveil/nndss/dislist.htm> for implementation. The definitions for over 60 national notifiable diseases were developed through a consensus approach and include clinical, laboratory and epidemiological evidence. All states and territories are to use these surveillance case definitions when notifying to the NNDSS.

National infection control guidelines

With extensive consultation and the assistance of the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing and an expert advisory group, CDNA completed its review of the national infection control guidelines in 2003.

This review brings together the NHMRC documents *Infection Control in the Health Care Setting: Guidelines for the Prevention of Transmission of Infectious Diseases* (1996) and *Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease and Other Human Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies: Guidelines on Patient Management and Infection Control* (1995). The Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council, through the National Public Health Partnership, endorsed the new CDNA document *Infection Control Guidelines for the Prevention of Transmission of Infectious Diseases in the Health Care Setting* in January 2004.

The guidelines will be a useful resource to guide or implement infection control policy for health care establishments and individual health care workers. The scope of the guidelines is broad and applies to a wide range of health care establishments, including hospitals, (medical and dental) office practices, long-term residential care establishments, community nursing, emergency and first aid services.

Copies of the guidelines will be provided to hospitals, clinics, medical centres, surgeries, health authorities, professional organisations and aged care facilities. More information and a copy of the guidelines are available from <http://www.icg.health.gov.au>

Communicable diseases on aeroplanes

Health departments may be notified of patients who have been diagnosed with a communicable disease after having travelled in an aeroplane while infectious. To assist state and territory health departments in deciding whether potential contacts of an infectious aeroplane traveller should be notified about their possible exposures, CDNA has developed the document *Follow-up of Communicable Diseases Reported Among Travellers on Aeroplanes*, published in this issue of *Communicable Diseases Intelligence*, p. 270–271, and also available from the CDNA website. Recommendations for following up contacts of passengers with measles are still under consideration by CDNA.

Severe acute respiratory syndrome and highly pathogenic avian influenza

In fortnightly meetings of CDNA, members monitored global and regional activity of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and highly pathogenic avian influenza. During this period, CDNA developed the *Protocol for Isolation, Testing and Reporting of Possible Cases of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)*, which is available from: <http://www.health.gov.au/sars/guidelines/protocol.htm>. The protocol defines criteria (clinical features and potential exposure) that must be met before testing a patient for SARS coronavirus is requested. The protocol also explains who should be contacted if a patient meets the specified criteria.

To provide health advice to protect poultry workers during an outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza, CDNA developed the guidelines *Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza: Interim Health Advice for Poultry and Associated Industries*. These guidelines are available from: http://www.health.gov.au/avian_influenza/index.htm

How to contact CDNA

Key activities of CDNA will be reported quarterly in *Communicable Diseases Intelligence*. For further information, please contact the CDNA Secretariat at CDNA@health.gov.au or telephone +61 2 6289 7983 or refer to the CDNA website at <http://www.cda.gov.au/cdna/index.htm> or <http://www.nphp.gov.au/workprog/cdna/index.htm>