

## **Health Notification**

### **Importation of Infectious Diseases: Public Health Recommendations to Manage the Returning Traveler**

**April 9, 2018**

International travel increases the risk of contracting infectious diseases that can then be introduced locally. Several vaccine preventable diseases (measles, mumps, influenza), severe respiratory pathogens (tuberculosis, MERS-CoV) and vector-borne infections (malaria, yellow fever, Zika, chikungunya, dengue) circulate around the world and could be imported to Philadelphia. The Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH) Division of Disease Control encourages providers to always take a travel history, maintain familiarity with infectious diseases potentially acquired abroad, order appropriate diagnostic tests, and implement infection control actions to limit spread.

#### **Essential Resources**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) maintains a site of Travel Health Notices, searchable by disease or country:

<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices>. A good review of the management of patients who recently traveled, entitled "General Approach to the Returned Traveler", can be accessed at the CDC website:

<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/yellowbook/2018/post-travel-evaluation/general-approach-to-the-returned-traveler>.

#### **Important Actions for Clinical Providers**

- Routinely assess travel history especially for patients with fever, rash, GI or severe respiratory illness
- Assess travel history for household members and other close contacts to identify additional exposure risks
- Review travel itinerary and exposure history, timing of illness onset in relation to travel, illness severity, medical history, and pre-travel immunizations or prophylaxis
- Order appropriate diagnostic tests. Contact PDPH at 215-685-6742 for coordination of specialized and confirmatory testing not routinely available through commercial laboratories (i.e., polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing for measles and mumps, PCR and neutralizing antibody testing for arboviral infections, etc.).
- Follow treatment and disease control recommendations (separation of ill patients, use of surgical type masks, exclusion of ill family members).
- Report suspect and confirmed notifiable conditions to PDPH promptly. During business hours (8:30 – 5:00), call 215-685-6740. For urgent cases after hours, call 215-686-4514 and ask for Division of Disease Control on-call staff.

#### **Health Risks and Current Outbreaks**

- Ongoing measles and mumps outbreaks are occurring in Europe, Indonesia, and New Zealand. Both viruses are spread via airborne transmission or direct contact with respiratory droplets from an ill person.
- Infections transmitted by mosquitoes (Zika, chikungunya, dengue, and malaria) are common in most tropical and subtropical destinations. These infections can cause febrile illness and/or rash. Dengue and untreated malaria infections can cause serious complications requiring hospitalization, while Zika virus infection during pregnancy can result in microcephaly, fetal loss, or other birth defects. An outbreak of yellow fever virus is occurring in several states in Brazil and has resulted in fatalities among unvaccinated, international travelers.
- Severe respiratory pathogens like MERS Co-V continue to pose a risk for travelers from the Arabian Peninsula and tuberculosis exposure risk is especially high in Africa, Asia and South America. Multidrug resistant tuberculosis is a growing concern worldwide and warrants susceptibility testing.

#### **SUMMARY POINTS**

- Always take a patient's travel history
- Be familiar with infectious disease outbreaks and exposure risks abroad to expedite diagnosis, treatment and prevention
- Identify infectious patients early and keep them separate from others
- Report travel-related infections to PDPH at 215-685-6740 (after hours: 215-686-4514)