

Hong Kong Flu to Peak During Christmas Week

Hong Kong flu, a virus which will reach its peak in Los Angeles County between now and Christmas, may be an unwelcome gift; but the disease certainly will not come as a surprise package, Los Angeles County Health Officer, Dr. Gerald A. Heidbreder reported today.

"We have been keeping Los Angeles County residents informed on this flu virus since early September," Dr. Heidbreder said. "Past public health experience taught us that a communicable disease which hits Hong Kong cannot be isolated in an age when the Orient is only hours away by air travel," the Health Officer concluded.

The early stages of the Hong Kong flu began with an isolated case brought to California by a Redwood City American employe last July 27. This incident was followed by a sporadic outbreak at the Marine Corps depot in San Diego. Here, 21 Marine Corps combat sergeants contracted the Hong Kong flu. Of the 21, at least 15 of the sergeants had returned from Vietnam, first stopping off in Hong Kong. These men were hospitalized Sept. 3 and returned to work by Sept. 6.

THE FIRST major outbreak in California occurred among high school students in Needles. According to the California State Department of Public Health, approximately 500 students in Needles became ill.

Gradually the sporadic flu-like outbreaks began to fan out in Los Angeles County. Meanwhile, the Health Department worked closely with the USC Infectious Disease Laboratory in an effort to isolate the virus.

By the first week in December, three junior high school students and an aircraft industrial worker were found to have the Hong Kong flu.

Generally the Hong Kong flu symptoms include a headache, muscle pain, eye pain, sore throat, and a low grade fever.

THIS COMMUNICABLE disease is particularly dangerous to people over 65 and those who are chronically ill. Unless com-

lications set in, those under 65 and in good health may become sick but are able to shake the flu bug within three to four days.

When Dr. Heidbreder learned that the virus had hit Hong Kong in early summer, he immediately called his key staff together to learn the best way of keeping the public informed, and also what measures could be taken to protect as many people as possible.

The first step taken by the Health Officer was to determine how soon the flu bug would reach California. By late August, the best information showed that sporadic flu incidents would occur in September, October, November, with the peaking of the epidemic expected in late December or the early part of the New Year.

As soon as it was determined that the Hong Kong virus would reach epidemic proportions in Los Angeles County, then the Health Officer asked his staff to place the annual flu surveillance

program into operation immediately.

THROUGH this surveillance program, the Health Department received both telephonic and written reports from schools and industry.

It was this surveillance program that showed absenteeism was beginning to grow and flu-like symptoms were given as one of the major reasons.

The Health Department immediately checked with all the large pharmaceutical drug manufacturers that were planning to produce a vaccine to combat the Hong Kong flu.

It became evident quickly that there would not be enough vaccine to treat everyone who wanted a shot. Realizing that panic is one of the most serious problems in any epidemic, Dr. Heidbreder instructed his staff to keep the public briefed on all phases of this problem.

AS A RESULT, the news

media were informed when the first vaccine arrived — even though it was only 100 vials containing one thousand doses of the vaccine. This minute supply went to one-fifth of the tuberculosis patients that were under treatment in county health clinics. Since the Health Department had 5,000 TB patients, the first supply was not adequate to protect all of these high risk cases, and the information was

transmitted to the public through the news media.

Once the Hong Kong flu was isolated, the Health Department called a press conference at the County Hall of Administration, again for the purpose of keeping the residents of this area informed.

DR. HEIDBREDER praises his Acute Communicable Disease Control staff in the Health Department and his Medical

Services Director, Dr. Benjamin A. Kogan. He contends that without the help of these devoted individuals who spent numerous hours of overtime, the job might not have been done as effectively.

"A department is only as good as its staff," said Dr. Heidbreder, "and the Hong Kong flu epidemic shows that our Health Department personnel are dedicated far beyond the call of duty when an emergency arises."

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Article on Disabled Published

"Process and Tasks in Hoping," an article by Dr. Beatrice A. Wright and Dr. Franklin C. Shontz, is featured as the article of the month in the November issue of *Rehabilitation Literature*, the monthly magazine of the National Easter Seal Society. Dr. Wright is currently affiliated with the graduate program of the social and behavioral sciences department at California State College, Dominguez Hills.

Dr. Wright has taught at many colleges and universities both inside and outside of the United States, including the University of Hawaii, the University of Western Australia, San Francisco State College, Stanford of California at Los Angeles.

The author of numerous articles in the field of social psychology, Dr. Wright has also written several books. *Physical Disability — A Psychological Approach*, published by Harpers in 1960, won the Child Study Association of America Book Award in that year and since has been translated into both Dutch and Polish.

Auction Scheduled Saturday

Personal property belonging to some 60 estates will be sold at auction Saturday, Balso M. Kristovich, public administrator for Los Angeles County, announced today.

General inspection will begin at 9 a.m. and inspection of jewelry and other small items is scheduled to begin at 10 a.m.

All sales will be "as is" and only cash or a cashier's check can be accepted in payment.

Among items to be sold are paintings, mirrors, major appliances, power tools, china, sterling clocks, sewing machines, typewriters, books, and assorted jewelry.

A special auction has been scheduled for Saturday Jan. 11.

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