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Outbreak of *Mycoplasma pneumoniae* Among Hospital Employees

by Gina Pugliese, RN, MS
Medical News Editor

Following the development of pneumonia in 14 internal medicine employees of a Texas hospital during the second week of August 1993, an investigation was conducted to determine the etiology and extent of illness, including the possibility of transmission to patients.

Between August 1 and November 14, 214 cases were identified. Radiographs showed pneumonia in 43 (20%) persons; 6 (3%) required hospitalization. There were no deaths. The attack rate among internal medicine employ-

ees was 26%. While all cultures were negative, 12 (21%) of the 58 case patients with paired serum specimens showed a fourfold rise in antibody titer to *Mycoplasma* species and 47 (71%) showed an elevated convalescent titer of $\geq 1:32$. Western immunoblotting with patient sera identified *Mycoplasma pneumoniae* as the species causing disease. One (2%) of 47 patients discharged from medical wards and three outpatients cared for by ill physicians developed symptoms meeting the case definition.

The authors concluded that this outbreak of *M pneumoniae* caused significant morbidity among hospital employees and posed a potential risk to

patients cared for by ill physicians. The authors note that culture for *M pneumoniae* is difficult and the use of new serologic and molecular tests for *M pneumoniae* may be important to establish an etiologic diagnosis, facilitating antimicrobial therapy or prophylaxis to limit the spread of infection.

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