

# The Infection Connection

**LD** LAWRENCE-DOUGLAS COUNTY  
Health Department  
www.ldchealth.org

## State changes surveillance of pertussis

Pertussis case numbers may decrease in 2013 but that does not mean there is less disease. As of Jan. 1, health departments are only investigating reports of positive polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests because most patients with a negative test do not have pertussis.

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment reporting requirements changed after analysis of the influx of reported cases — more than 1,800 — and the amount of time state and local health department staff spent investigating both positive and negative PCR reports.

The KDHE Bureau of Epi-

demiology and Public Health Information analyzed 2012 pertussis surveillance data for case classification and lab testing results. It found approximately 40 percent of the case reports met either the confirmed or probable surveillance case definition. Almost half of the reported cases had a negative PCR test result and 70 percent of those never met the confirmed or probable case definition.

Although the performance of the PCR test can vary substantially by laboratory, and both false positive and false negative

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**Shirley Grubbs**, communicable disease nurse at the Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department, enters data for a pertussis case. Health Department staff were inundated with pertussis cases in 2012.

### *KDHE reporting earlier than usual flu activity*

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment recently reported that the state is seeing widespread flu activity earlier than usual.

As of Jan. 16, there had been about 495 flu/pneumonia-related deaths in Kansas this flu season, and one was a child under age 18 in north-central Kansas.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends antiviral medications for treatment of influenza and annual vaccination as the best tools for prevention. Clinical trials and observational data show that early antiviral treatment may do the following: shorten the duration of fever and illness symptoms, reduce the risk of complications from flu, and shorten the duration of hospitalization.

The Lawrence-Douglas County Health De-



**Jeff Mekus, 18**, gets a flu shot from Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department Clinic Coordinator Kathy Colson on Jan. 16. During the past couple of weeks, the clinic saw a significant increase in residents who wanted a flu vaccine.

partment offers flu shots on a walk-in basis at its clinic. Vaccines cost \$23 for children ages 6 months to 35 months, and \$28 for anyone ages 3 and older. No one is denied service for inability to pay.

### Meningococcal vaccine available at reduced cost

The Health Department is offering the meningococcal vaccine at a reduced cost — \$14 or less — for individuals who qualify through a grant.

To qualify, an individual must be 19 years old or older, uninsured, and attending a secondary education school. The vaccine typically costs about \$100.

The vaccine helps protect against specific types of meningitis. The most serious types can result in brain damage or even death.

## Douglas County Disease Report

Disease category	Disease name	Sept. 12	Oct. 12	Nov. 12	Dec. 12	Total
Enteric	Campylobacteriosis	1	2	3	1	7
	Cryptosporidiosis	0	1	0	0	1
	Salmonellosis	4	1	2	1	8
	Shiga Toxin	1	1	0	0	2
	Giardia	0	0	0	1	1
General	Group A - Strep	1	0	0	0	1
	Hepatitis B- chronic	2	0	0	1	3
	Hepatitis C	7	9	8	6	30
	Strep pneumo. invasive	0	0	1	2	3
Vector	RMSF	4	0	0	0	4
	Lyme Disease	1	0	0	0	1
	Ehrlichiosis	0	0	0	0	0
	West Nile Virus	2	0	0	0	2
	Dengue	0	0	0	0	0
Vaccine-preventable	Pertussis	14	34	56	44	148
	Varicella	0	1	1	0	2
STDs (tested at HD only)	Chlamydia	11	11	11	11	44
	Gonorrhea	2	2	4	0	8
	Syphilis	0	0	0	0	0

This report includes the number of cases investigated by the Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department. Case classifications include: Confirmed, probable and suspect.

## Pertussis persists in county

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results can occur, the PCR test is generally a highly sensitive test. Therefore, most patients with a negative PCR test most likely do not have pertussis, particularly in the absence of epidemiologic evidence linking the patient to a confirmed pertussis case.

Based on these results, KDHE is no longer entering pertussis reports with negative PCR tests. It also recommends that local health department staff do not devote substantial resources for investigating any such reports that are sent directly to them.

Shirley Grubbs, communicable disease nurse at the Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department, said, "It now means there likely are more pertussis cases out there that we are unaware of."

In Douglas County, the Health Department reported 214 cases in 2012, compared to 17 in 2011.

In investigating cases, Grubbs said most of them had one of the following symptoms in addition to a cough lasting more than two weeks.

- Coughing fits or paroxysms.
- There is a deep inhalation after a coughing spell (whoop sound).
- Coughing that would cause a person to gag or vomit.

The Health Department strongly encourages people to take precautions to avoid school, work and public places when sick and to check with their doctor. While vaccinations are not 100-percent effective, they help reduce the complications of the illness.

The Health Department offers pertussis vaccines through its walk-in clinic, 200 Maine. Some adults may be eligible to receive the pertussis vaccine at a reduced rate if they meet certain income guidelines. If you have questions, contact the Health Department at 785-843-0721.

## Health Department implements EMR system

Good-bye paper.

The Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department switched to a new electronic medical record system Jan. 2. It is using Netsmart Technologies' Insight system, which is specifically designed for the unique needs of public health. More than 130 public health organizations and 10 state health departments use it across the country.

The Lawrence-Douglas County

Health Department is only the fifth health department in the state to use an electronic medical record system. The new system is helping to improve operational efficiencies. Insight also allows staff members to better track and report time-sensitive information.

Additionally, the Health Department will be able to be part of the Kansas Health Information Exchange with the new system.



Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department employees, from left, Kim Ens, director of Clinic Services; Vince Romero, analyst; and Debbie Mitchell, office assistant, practice using the new medical record system during a training session in December.

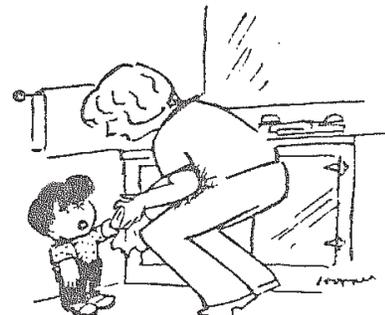
## Bedbugs? We handle complaints

This fall, the Health Department began handling bedbug complaints in Douglas County. Bedbugs are a growing problem, especially in hotels and apartments. The tiny insects don't transmit diseases, but they do bite, multiply rapidly and are extremely difficult to get rid of. The Environmental Health team works with trusted pest control companies to eradicate the bedbug problem. They also provide education about the pests. If you have a bedbug complaint, call 843-3060 or email [info@ldchealth.org](mailto:info@ldchealth.org).

Save this number: 24-7 EPI hotline

To alert the Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department to a reportable disease after hours, please use this number: (785) 813-1660.

## Laughter is the best medicine



"Do other kids get washed all the time like I do, or is it just because you work in the Health Department?"