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Public Announcement

USNH Okinawa Public Affairs

Recently, several confirmed cases of pertussis have been reported in the U. S. military community on Okinawa. According to U. S. Naval Hospital Okinawa Preventive Medicine Department officials, pertussis cases to date have been identified in both adolescents and adults.

Pertussis, commonly known as “whooping cough”, is an infectious respiratory disease caused by the bacterium *Bordetella pertussis*. According to the U. S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, symptoms of pertussis involve rapid, violent coughing, which often makes it hard to breathe. Pertussis can cause illness in infants, children, and adults however it is most dangerous for unvaccinated infants.

Signs & Symptoms:

Early symptoms include runny nose, low-grade fever (sometimes absent) and mild occasional cough. After disease progression patients may have fits of rapid coughs followed by high-pitched “whoop”, vomiting after coughing, and exhaustion after coughing fits. A cough lasting more than two weeks could also be a symptom of pertussis.

Prevention & Treatment:

Pertussis is a largely preventable disease through vaccination and is generally treated with antibiotics. Those who receive the vaccine series are unlikely to contract the disease, and those vaccinated individuals who do get the disease typically have a much milder disease severity. Those diagnosed with pertussis should remain at home for 5 days after beginning treatment to avoid spreading the disease.

The staff of U.S. Naval Hospital Okinawa is prepared to provide care to beneficiaries showing symptoms of pertussis. Children and adults that have had direct contact with confirmed cases will be evaluated and treated appropriately if they are determined to be at risk.

Anyone that suspects they or their family member may be showing symptoms of pertussis should contact their primary care manager (PCM) to schedule an evaluation.

Any concerns or questions may be directed to the U.S. Naval Hospital Okinawa Preventive Medicine Department at 643-8012 or 080-6861-5322.

Further information on pertussis is available at the U. S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention website at <http://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/about>.

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