



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
P. O. BOX 3378
HONOLULU, HI 96801-3378

In reply, please refer to:
File:

August 3, 2016

John Ward, MD
Director, Division of Viral Hepatitis
National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
1600 Clifton Road NE
Atlanta, Georgia 30333

Dear Dr. Ward,

The Hawaii Department of Health (HDOH) has been heavily engaged in investigating and controlling an ongoing, large hepatitis A outbreak in our state. We were first notified of 4 unrelated cases during the week of June 20, 2016, and the outbreak has continued to expand to include now 135 cases with onsets of illness ranging from June 12–July 24, 2016. There continue to be no readily evident epidemiologic links or relationships among the cases, and our findings suggest the etiologic exposure is likely a widely distributed, commonly consumed product primarily obtained on the island of Oahu. Early in our investigation, we engaged federal partners both at the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) and CDC, specifically within your division as well as the Outbreak Response & Prevention Branch, Division of Foodborne, Waterborne & Environmental Diseases, to determine potential related issues in other regions and gain additional expert perspectives to assist in our investigation.

While we are making progress in our investigation, other critical issues demand equal attention, namely preparing for and assuring Hawaii's response to the possibility of local acquisition of Zika infection and our upcoming annual statewide school flu vaccination program. With the latter, the same program comprising the lead for our hepatitis A investigation is also the lead for this mass vaccination effort, the planning and operations of which are now severely compromised. Additionally, we are in need of skilled staff, preferably with clinical and outbreak investigational experience, to provide support with some of the crucial advanced epidemiological activities and analyses as well as product traceback activities.

Therefore, I am requesting technical support from CDC in the form of two EIS officers and a senior staff person with outbreak investigation and subject matter expertise, to assist us in our efforts to specifically:

- Provide epidemiological support to better elucidate the possible implication of Restaurant A and possibly further to certain Distributors in question—including development of focused questionnaires to determine background population consumption of certain items and at certain establishments of interest, possible case-control study to obtain more definitive epidemiological evidence, related analyses and line list management

- Facilitate clinical review of case data to better understand the potential health impacts suffered by infected persons
- Facilitate product traceback, collection, and data management/analyses

We anticipate the start date for this team would be Monday, August 8, 2016 with initial duration of at least 2 weeks, preferably 3, and reassessment of our need by me (State Epidemiologist) near the end of the 2-week mark. The team will report to me or my Deputy State Epidemiologist, Dr. Melissa Viray (EISO '07), if at any time I am unavailable.

Legal authority for the Hawaii Department of Health (HDOH) to collect health information is provided in §321-29 of Hawaii Revised Statutes. This section allows HDOH to conduct epidemiologic investigations to “determine the nature and extent of diseases and injuries deemed by the department to threaten public health and safety.” As this team would be working in collaboration with HDOH and therefore as agents of the State, they would have access to confidential information in the course of our investigation. Furthermore, in accordance with the Hawaii Revised Statutes § 321-29, “All information provided to the department under this section shall be kept strictly confidential...Access to confidential records shall be restricted to those individuals specifically authorized to participate in any given investigation.”

All data collected as part of the overall investigation, including various parts, and response related to the current outbreak should be considered HDOH data with any presentation or publication subject to approval by me. We do anticipate, at minimum, a manuscript describing the outbreak would be produced after the conclusion of our investigations. First and last authors will be from HDOH with inclusion of at least the members of the CDC team and other key CDC staff whom we identify as assisting substantially to the investigation. Our usual practice is to alternate HDOH and CDC authors in the author list; further details on this may be discussed at a later date.

This request is valid for the duration of the above noted investigation and is not transferable. Please contact me if you have any questions regarding this request or the terms outlined. We greatly appreciate your assistance.

Sincerely,



Sarah Y. Park, MD, FAAP (EISO '02)
State Epidemiologist
Hawaii Department of Health

c: Virginia Pressler, MD, Director, Hawaii Department of Health
Robert Tauxe, MD, Director, Division of Foodborne, Waterborne & Environmental Diseases