PRESS RELEASE

NPHIL-MoH Rapidly Respond to Confirmed Meningitis Case in Grand Kru County

Monrovia, Liberia, January 14, 2020: The National Public Health Institute of Liberia (NPHIL) in collaboration with the Ministry of Health (MoH) and partners, is responding to a confirmed meningitis case in Grand Kru County, southeast Liberia.

Liberia is not known to be in the meningitis belt. However, there has been three separate clusters of meningitis cases reported in the country since 2017 in which most patients died within 24 hours. On April 25, 2017, a cluster of unexplained illnesses associated with a funeral was reported in Sinoe County. A total of 28 meningitis cases were recorded: 13 confirmed, 3 probable, and 12 suspected cases. Thirteen patients died.

On September 22, 2017, Grand Kru County Health Team reported three suspected cases of meningitis that were detected in Barclayville Health District. The index case was a 22-year-old female patient who was admitted on September 7, 2017 but died on September 9, 2017, two days after admission in the hospital.

Also in January 2018, 9 cases including 4 deaths associated with meningococcal disease were reported in three communities of Foya District, Lofa County. Majority of the deaths occurred within 24-48 hours of symptoms onset.

The recent case in Grand Kru County is a 12 year-old female from Grandcess. On December 31, 2019, the case visited Rally Time Hospital where she presented with fever (38.3°C), unconsciousness, stiff neck, weakness, and weak extremities. A sample was collected immediately and tested positive for meningitis on January 8, 2020 by the National Public Health Reference Laboratory in Charlestonville, Margibi County.

Following the confirmation of the case, a team, comprising experts from the Quality Management Unit at the Ministry of Health and the Epidemiology Unit at the National Public Health Institute of Liberia was quickly deployed to Grand Kru County. The team provided ciprofloxacin to all contacts and septrin to treat the confirmed case. Financial and logistical support has also been provided to the County Health Team.
So far, the patient has been successfully treated and discharged. A total of 40 contacts (17 healthcare workers, 23 community and family members) have been identified and followed up.

According to a release, the rapid response by NPHIL and MoH is to prevent reoccurrence of rapid deaths.

Also, on January 11, 2020, a 10 year-old female from Barclayville was suspected of meningitis upon arrival at the Rally Time Hospital in Barclayville. Sample has been collected, pending confirmation by the National Public Health Reference Laboratory. This case has no link to the index case. Fourteen (14) contacts (family and community members) have been identified.

Meningitis is an acute inflammation of the protective membranes covering the brain and spinal cord, known collectively as the meninges. The most common symptoms are fever, headache, and neck stiffness. Other symptoms include confusion or altered consciousness, vomiting, and an inability to tolerate light.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the bacteria are transmitted from person-to-person through droplets of respiratory or throat secretions from carriers. Close and prolonged contact – such as kissing, sneezing or coughing on someone, or living in close quarters (such as a dormitory, sharing eating or drinking utensils) with an infected person facilitates the spread of the disease. The average incubation period is 4 days, but can range between 2 and 10 days.

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