



MRC ★ In Touch

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Featured Article

PHRC Responds to Norovirus Outbreak in Apartment Complex

Volunteers from the Public Health Reserve Corps (Seattle-King County, WA) recently responded to a norovirus outbreak in an apartment complex that houses approximately 270 residents after an onsite nurse at the building called the health department to find out how many people with gastroenteritis symptoms constituted an outbreak. The norovirus spread at the apartment complex and by the end of the day, at least a dozen residents were experiencing similar symptoms.

Norovirus is a viral infection that is often implicated as the root cause of foodborne illnesses and usually lasts 1–3 days. It can be prevented by thorough hand-washing. Individuals suffering from the norovirus should avoid direct or indirect contact with others, and avoid handling or preparing food. It can be serious and lead to hospitalization with the elderly, small children, and individuals who have underlying conditions.

A day after the PHRC was contacted by the nurse, volunteers arrived at the complex. Prior to responding, the PHRC received just-in-time training from public health nurses who provided information about the virus and the residents at the building who were affected, and the environmental sanitizing and surveys that would be needed to assess how many people were experiencing symptoms.

Upon arriving at the complex, the volunteers split into two teams. The first team assisted the building staff with sanitizing the lobby area, all the banisters in a 10-floor building, the laundry and garbage rooms, and the elevator buttons and rails. This was no easy feat. Environmental surfaces that are touched need to be sanitized with a bleach solution (1/3 cup bleach per gallon of cool water) mixed fresh every four hours, or with a sanitizing agent that is effective enough against the norovirus.

The second team helped conduct a brief survey of the residents living on various floors of the building who had not already been surveyed by the building staff. Approximately 140 units in the building were surveyed by either PHRC volunteers or student nurses

who went door-to-door the day before.

The two teams were a huge asset to the building's janitorial and social work staff due to their limited staff members and limited time. The apartment complex has many residents that are medically fragile and the PHRC prevented these residents from being taken to the emergency room. In addition, the PHRC helped to slow down the spread of the norovirus and there were fewer reports of people experiencing symptoms after the efforts of the unit.

MRC/NACCHO Connections

Resources, Tools, and Training Opportunities to Assist with Accreditation

The Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) is developing a voluntary national accreditation program for state, local, territorial, and tribal health departments that launches in 2011. NACCHO provides tools, resources, and training opportunities to local health departments to assist in their preparation for accreditation and in using quality improvement processes to improve performance and meet PHAB standards.

<http://www.naccho.org/topics/infrastructure/accreditation/index.cfm>

Announcements

Deadline Reminders for the Capacity Building Award Contract

Capacity Building Award Contract Changes Deadline: April 29, 2011

Capacity Building Award Contract Submission Deadline: July 29, 2011

If you have any questions, please contact Rebecca Gehring, Program Associate at NACCHO, at rgehring@naccho.org.

Register Today for the 2011 Integrated Training Summit

The 2011 Integrated Medical, Public Health, Preparedness and Response Training Summit will take place May 1–5, 2011 in Grapevine, TX.

How to Register

There is not a direct link to register. The application and registration are combined into one. Visit <http://www.integratedtrainingsummit.org>. Click the tab on the top that says "Registration." At the top of the page click on the "Register Now" link. Choose your registration type in the "Contact Type" drop down menu (either MRC Unit Leader scholarship or MRC State Coordinator scholarship).

If you have any other questions, contact Laura Harrison at lharrison@naccho.org.

Psychological First Aid in Radiation Disasters

The below link includes information about psychological first aid in radiation disasters, examples of psychosocial reactions, video scenarios, and a test.

http://www.orau.gov/RSB/RMH/introduction_introduction_01.html

MRC Lessons Learned and Experience Sharing

"MRC lessons learned and experience sharing" is a way for MRC units to share their practices, examples, and success stories. It is designed to highlight the challenges and successes of MRC units' involvement with emergency preparedness, response, and public health activities; therefore, MRC units and their leaders can learn from one another.

<http://www.naccho.org/topics/emergency/MRC/resources/mrcshare.cfm>

To submit information for either MRC: In Touch or MRC: In Focus, please contact Megan Skupien at mskupien@naccho.org or (202)783-1376.



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1100 17th Street, NW, 2nd Floor, Washington, DC 20036