



HEALTH ADVISORY

Wednesday, November 28, 2018

Wound Botulism Case Associated with Black Tar Heroin

One highly suspect case of wound botulism associated with black tar heroin injection has been reported in Imperial County. The case presented to the emergency department with an abscess and a recent history of skin or muscle popping black tar heroin. Symptoms included nausea, vomiting, dizziness, slurred speech, hoarseness, dry mouth, dysphagia, ptosis, and generalized weakness. Patient has been treated with Botulism Antitoxin Heptavalent (BAT®) released by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and specimens have been submitted to the Viral and Rickettsial Disease Laboratory (VRDL) for confirmation.

Botulism is a rare but potentially fatal illness caused by a neurotoxin produced by *Clostridium botulinum* bacteria. Wound botulism may present up to 14 days post-drug use. Presenting symptoms of botulism usually include drooping eyelids (ptosis), difficulty swallowing (dysphagia), slurred speech, and descending paralysis. Not all IDU with wound botulism will present with a visible abscess or infected wound, and history of neurological symptoms may be difficult to obtain. Therefore, a high index of suspicion for wound botulism is required in a patient with an IDU history and compatible clinical signs. Prompt clinical diagnosis is imperative as timely administration of heptavalent botulinum antitoxin (BAT) may slow progression of disease and save lives.

Imperial County Public Health Department (ICPHD) is asking clinicians to be vigilant and report any suspect cases immediately to the Communicable Disease Reporting line at (442) 265-1464 and for after hours contact the Duty Officer at (760) 455-4083. ICPHD staff can facilitate release of botulism antitoxin from the California Department of Public Health (CDPH).

For more information on wound botulism, please visit <https://www.cdc.gov/botulism/health-professional.html>

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