



STATE OF NEW YORK
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

161 Delaware Avenue Delmar, NY 12054-1393

Antonia C. Novello, M.D., M.P.H., Dr. P.H.
Commissioner

Dennis P. Whalen
Executive Deputy Commissioner

September 29, 2006

DQS/DAL #: 06-16

**RE: Long-term Care Facility
Associated LEGIONELLOSIS
(LEGIONNAIRES' DISEASE)**

Dear Long-term Care Facility Administrator:

Continued outbreaks of Legionnaires' disease in nursing homes and other health care facilities underscores the importance of environmental and clinical surveillance measures, as well as the proper maintenance of potable water systems and cooling towers in the development and implementation of an effective prevention and control program. This letter is to inform you that the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) will issue additional guidance to nursing homes concerning Legionnaires' disease prevention and control programs in the near future. This guidance will update the material issued by NYSDOH in 1999 and will focus on areas of concern pertinent to the common risk factors present in nursing homes. Information will be provided on the prevention and control of facility-associated Legionnaires' disease in nursing homes, including:

- Guidance for clinicians on diagnosis and laboratory testing;
- Guidance for infection control activities for prevention, surveillance, investigation, and control;
- Guidance accompanied by appropriate updated references and additional resources, for risk assessment of potable water systems and cooling towers, routine operational, maintenance and surveillance of those systems, response to possible or confirmed healthcare facility-associated Legionnaires' disease cases.

The extent of measures taken to prevent facility-associated Legionnaires' disease will depend largely on the risk factors for acquiring Legionnaires' disease in the population served by the nursing home. Persons 65 years of age or older are at moderately increased risk for acquiring Legionnaires' disease. Therefore, most nursing homes will have a significant number of residents at risk. Nursing homes that provide specialized care or services, such as care to individuals with HIV or ventilator dependent residents will have individuals at risk for Legionnaires' disease, regardless of age. Nursing homes that admit or retain immunosuppressed residents including those who have undergone organ transplants, have hematologic malignancies, or are on corticosteroids as well as other medically complex residents such as those with severe pneumonia requiring ventilation and respiratory support

measures are expected to follow the NYSDOH Hospital-associated Legionellosis (Legionnaires' disease) guidance document, found at the following link on the NYSDOH Website:

http://www.nyhealth.gov/nysdoh/infection/docs/doc050714_0.pdf

Nursing homes should review the 1999 guidance document available at the above link, to evaluate the appropriateness of any existing measures they may have in place. Those facilities that have not yet developed a prevention and control program should, at a minimum, begin familiarizing themselves with existing recommendations. In both instances, nursing homes should be prepared to review and implement, as appropriate, the forthcoming recommendations.

Questions regarding this letter should be directed to David A. Brusco, Principal Sanitarian, Bureau of Surveillance and Quality Assurance for Nursing Homes at (518) 408-1267.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this important health matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Keith W. Servis".

Keith W. Servis, Director
Division of Quality & Surveillance
for Nursing Homes and ICFs/MR

cc: Local Health Departments