



Pertussis (Whooping Cough) in a Congolese Refugee Child from Gihembe Camp, Rwanda.

4 September 2014

Dear State Refugee Health Coordinator:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Immigrant, Refugee, and Migrant Health Branch has been notified of one case of pertussis (whooping cough) in a 7-year-old Congolese refugee who arrived from Gihembe Camp in Rwanda on 18 June, 2014. The child had her health assessment on 7 August, 2014, at which time she presented with a cough. The child was coughing for approximately 1 month before the health exam. *Bordetella pertussis* DNA was detected on a nasal swab that was collected at the time of the exam, and the child and her family were put on treatment. Although the timing of her onset of cough suggests it is unlikely she contracted pertussis overseas, there is a remote possibility that those refugees who traveled with this child as part of the caseload may have been exposed to pertussis.

Refugees who were part of the caseload have already arrived in the following states: PA, NY, AZ, VA, and FL. If your state is listed here, an Advanced Booking Notification (ABN) will be posted to your state-specific DGMQ Epi-X Refugee Health Forum.

Refugees departing from Rwanda do not receive any vaccinations as part of their overseas health assessment, which is conducted by physicians from the International Organization for Migration (IOM). CDC therefore recommends that all refugees that are part of this caseload be seen for their post-arrival health examinations as soon as feasible.

Pertussis is a very contagious disease only found in humans and is spread from person to person. People with pertussis usually spread the disease by coughing or sneezing while in close contact with others, who then breathe in the pertussis bacteria. The disease usually starts with cold-like symptoms and maybe a mild cough or fever. After 1 to 2 weeks, severe coughing can begin. Unlike the common cold, pertussis can become a series of coughing fits that continue for weeks. Pertussis can be serious and life threatening for infants too young to have been vaccinated. Symptoms of pertussis usually develop within 5–10 days after being exposed, but sometimes not for as long as 21 days. Additional information on pertussis is available at www.cdc.gov/pertussis/about/index.html or through your local health department.

CDC, with in-country and international partners, will continue to monitor the situation in Rwanda and will follow up with additional information, if necessary.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "H. Burke".

Heather Burke

Immigrant, Refugee, and Migrant Health Branch
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