Dorm hepatitis source unknown

By C. L. Iacatella
3-10-77

A recent outbreak of infectious hepatitis has affected 10 South Campus area residents since Friday, said Dr. H. Spencer Turner, director of student health services.

“The unexpected high number of cases in a short period of time, confined to one area” prompted an investigation by the Ohio Department of Health to find a common source for the virus, Turner said.

Confirmed cases of the hepatitis virus were reported from Bradley, Morrison, Paterson and Seibert dormitories where precautionary measures are being taken to prevent further contamination.

Roommates or close associates of a student with diagnosed hepatitis were asked to see physicians for examinations and possible preventive treatment.

THE VIRUS is spread by fecal-oral routes, mainly in the form of sharing food or drinks with a hepatitis carrier, Turner said.

“Washing hands after toilet use and other proper hygiene” could prevent contraction of the virus, Turner said.

The state’s three-member survey team from the Division of Infectious Diseases began interviews on Tuesday. Members of the team are talking to students with hepatitis and friends who may have been in contact with the infected students to determine a common source of exposure such as a party or food.

The virus could spread from one person to another. But, the large number of cases in a relatively short period of time indicates contraction occurred through some form of group activity, Turner said.

Symptoms include fatigue, fever, nausea and vomiting — similar to stomach flu symptoms.

State Probing OSU Hepatitis Outbreak

3-12-77 Dispatch

Ohio State University health officials have asked the Ohio Department of Health to try to find out what has caused an outbreak of infectious hepatitis on campus.

Sixteen students have confirmed cases of the disease. Most of them live in the south campus area, Dr. H. Spencer Turner, director of Student Health Services at OSU, said Friday.

TURNER SAID the unusually high number of cases in such a short period of time prompted the request for help from the state health department.

There were only two confirmed cases of the liver ailment on campus during the entire winter quarter last year, according to Turner.

Students started coming to the campus medical center for treatment about a week ago. Several more cases were treated Monday and an additional case was confirmed Thursday.

The majority of the students treated for the disease live in Bradley, Morrison, Paterson and Siebert dormitories. The student who was treated at the campus medical facility Thursday lives in Mack Hall, also in the south campus area.

Precautions such as medical treatment for residents in the dormitories have been started at the campus health center to keep the virus from spreading.

Because a few of the people treated do not live anywhere near the south campus area, Turner believes the disease was contracted at some type of group activity, like a party.

TURNER SAYS the virus is shed in the feces as well as in saliva and is generally contracted by drinking from the same glass as an infected person or through unsanitary toilet habits.

Health department officials are interviewing roommates and other close associates of patients who have confirmed cases of the virus to find out if they have the symptoms, which include fatigue, fever, nausea and vomiting.

Turner believes the disease was contracted around March 2 or 3 by patients now being treated. He said symptoms usually appear three or four days after a person has been exposed to the disease.
Hepatitis outbreak infects 2 more; search for virus source continues

3-14-77

The recent outbreak of hepatitis reported on South Campus has now infected 12 students since March 4, said Dr. H. Spencer Turner, director of student health services.

An investigation by the Ohio Department of Health to find a common source for the hepatitis has not turned up any positive leads as of Wednesday.

THE STATE’S three-member survey team from the Division of Infectious Diseases began their investigation Tuesday and will continue indefinitely.

Confirmed cases of the hepatitis virus were reported from Bradley, Morrison, Paterson, Mack and Seibert dormitories.

Roommates or close associates of the students with diagnosed hepatitis were asked to see physicians for examinations and possible preventive treatment.

THE VIRUS is spread by fecal-oral routes, mainly in the form of sharing food or drinks with a hepatitis carrier, Turner said.

SINCE THERE is not an antidote, hepatitis patients are treated through supportive therapy which only prevent some symptoms, Turner said.

Two students with diagnosed hepatitis were temporarily hospitalized.

A meeting for South Campus resident hall employees will be held 8:30 a.m. today.

Cause of campus remains unknown hepatitis outbreak

By Susan Guernsey
3-23-77

The cause of the hepatitis outbreak in the South Campus dorms late Winter Quarter may never be pinpointed, Dr. Walton R. Garner, chief of preventative medicine at the student health center, said.

In a report released Friday by the Ohio Department of Health, investigators said they were unable to find the cause of the outbreak. Dr. James Marks of the state department said.

Both Garner and Dr. H. Spencer Turner, director of the student health center, were unavailable for comment on the report.

TWENTY CASES of hepatitis were reported to the health center by the end of Winter Quarter, but two of these were unrelated to South Campus, Garner said earlier. In a normal year, doctors at the student health center see 12 to 15 cases of hepatitis.

Garner speculated about two possible causes of the outbreak.

“A person unknowingly carrying the hepatitis virus may have been involved in food preparation for the South Campus dorms in early February. The virus may have been spread through food.”

As for the other possibility, Garner said it may have been related to the extremely cold weather in early February. With pipes freezing all over town, the drinking water of the dorms may have been contaminated, Garner said. “I’m sure other students in the South Campus dorms had hepatitis without knowing it. Usually only when a person becomes jaundiced, which is a yellowing of the skin and eyes, does he become aware he has hepatitis.”

HEPATITIS INFLAMMATION of the liver has a very broad definition. “Every time you have an alcoholic drink, you get a very mild form.”

By the end of the first week in March, Morrison, Bradley, Seibert, Mack and Stradley dorms had residents infected with the disease. Although none was severe, several cases were sent to the hospital. A few students dropped out of school for the quarter, Garner said.

However, Garner doesn’t foresee a continuing hepatitis problem.