



Emerging and Reemerging Infectious Diseases, Region of the Americas

Vol. 1, No. 23—11 December 2003

Severe respiratory disease in Colombia

From September 25th to November 28th, 2003 38 cases of a severe acute respiratory disease have been reported to the Colombian National Institute of Health (INS). The illness develops in a range of 10 to 7 days. The disease begins with high respiratory symptoms and fever, cough (with or without expectoration), dyspnea, headache, asthenia, and/or adynamia. Diarrhea, vomit or intense thoracic pain can also be present. Chest x-rays show interstitial and alveolar infiltrates. This illness has resulted in 13 deaths.

Information coming from health care providers of National Institutions evidences an increase of cases with respiratory infection. The disease is affecting patients ranging from 6 months-72 years old, with an average of 22 years old. Women represent 58% (22) of the cases. The most affected areas are: Antioquia, 19 cases (50%); North of Santander, 14 (37%) and Bogotá, 7 (13%). Four patients had other chronic diseases like Chronic Lung Disease, hypercoagulability syndrome and bronchial hyperreactivity.

In 16 of the 38 cases, the following respiratory viruses have been isolated: 2 with Influenza A, 2 with parainfluenza and 2 co-infections (one with Sincitial Respiratory Virus and parainfluenza 1, and another with Sincitial Respiratory Virus and influenza A).

Appropriate prevention and control measures have been taken, including educational messages for the population, awareness messages for health care providers and recommendation for influenza vaccination.

Source: [Alert. Severe acute respiratory disease outbreak](#)