



December 2024

152 ill after wedding meal in Morocco

<https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2024/12/367011/over-150-people-suffer-from-food-poisoning-after-wedding-dinner-in-moroccos-el-jadida>

Heading into the Christmas season it is very likely that for many of us we will be meeting with loads of family and friends and various colleagues for a variety of meals (and hopefully not too many drinks!) so perhaps this recent report from Morocco might create a word of caution before indulging in the festivities! This report does not describe the specific symptoms, incubation period or diagnosis so it can only be used to encourage personal care when attending any bigger gathering where food preparation, storage and hygiene may be less than ideal. This would easily be a significant risk at some of the Asian wedding feasts which last for many days and attract many hundreds of guests. Not sure? Ask any stretched and frazzled cook about keeping the Christmas dinner roasting hot while trying to get their guests seated!

27yo dies from Rabies in Maharashtra (India) 2 months after being bitten by a stray dog and a few weeks after being bitten by a stray cat

<https://www.freepressjournal.in/mumbai/thane-27-year-old-man-dies-of-rabies-after-stray-dog-and-cat-bites-in-kalyan-delayed-vaccine-blamed>

There can be little doubt that death from Rabies must be one of the worst ways to die. Typically, fully conscious, in major spasm, intense pain and knowing that the medics can do little to nothing to save you, they can just lower the pain. In this sad report it appears that the individual could have been exposed from either dog or cat contact. One point to emphasise is that the incubation period for Rabies can be very long, certainly many weeks but there are also reports of months and years after exposure before the symptoms begin. This is all down to the viral process and the path it takes towards the individual's brain. Higher body bites and those from aggressively angry animals (larger viral load deposited) tend to have shorter incubation periods whereas fortunately most bites are below the knee so that extends the pathway to the cerebral tissue which is its preferred destination. Working within Europe we seldom hear of Rabies within our region but nevertheless we have travellers who could easily have been exposed (bites, licks, scratches or any salivary contact) during a previous trip overseas and casually mention during your current consultation something along the lines of "oh, yes. I did have a scare from a monkey during my last trip". That type of confession must cause us practitioners to tell the individual about incubations and how horrific the disease is and just because their exposure was a year or more ago does not give them any cause for comfort. They should be seriously advised to have the required post exposure treatment at this stage and not just laugh off that potential risk. If they do, ensure you document that in the notes in case it comes back to haunt you in the days ahead.

Outbreak of Japanese Encephalitis in Mukah region of Sarawak (Malaysia)

<https://www.theborneopost.com/2024/12/14/health-ministry-mobilises-teams-to-monitor-japanese-encephalitis-outbreak-in-mukah/>

Japanese Encephalitis is one of these dreadful diseases which is fortunately rare among tourists but remaining a risk wherever the mosquitoes abound throughout much of SE Asia and across to India (mainly eastern side of that continent). It is referred to as a 'low risk but high impact' disease in that the infection rate is low but the mortality rate is into the 'awful' figures. So for many of our patients the risk of contracting this significant disease should be low unless they are involved in agriculture projects or staying in significantly rural regions of the infected countries. However constantly avoiding the attention of the pesky mosquitoes is always essential in these regions because of other issues anyway (eg Dengue, Chikungunya, Zika to name a few). See below for links to some outbreaks associated with these flying nemesis.

Update on Malaria reports from southern Dominican Republic as cases increase

<https://eldia.com.do/la-malaria-tiene-presencia-activa-en-el-sur-del-pais/>

Detailed report on Oropouche situation across Americas as case reports continue to become available

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/disease-outbreak-news/item/2024-DON545>

Further deaths from Dengue reported within Bangladesh

<https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/national/three-more-die-of-dengue-in-24-hours>

Chikungunya cases in Karachi (Pakistan) continue to be reported on a daily basis

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1878014/chikungunya-spread>

Dengue and Oropouche remain significant concerns in Cuba

<https://www.cubaheadlines.com/articles/293711>

Mosquito problems in Telangana State of India continue to grow with reports of Dengue, Malaria and Chikungunya

<https://www.siasat.com/telangana-sees-sharp-increase-in-dengue-chikungunya-malaria-cases-3146169/>

Reports of Dengue in Sri Lanka show a worsening situation

<https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking-news/Sri-Lanka-logs-over-850-Dengue-cases-in-eight-days/108-297692>

Suspected Trypanosomiasis outbreak in Cross River State of Nigeria

<https://crossriverwatch.com/2024/12/suspected-sleeping-sickness-breaks-out-in-cross-river-community/>

Otherwise known as 'Sleeping Sickness' this tsetse fly transmitted disease is a constant problem across Africa and especially a potential risk for any of our travellers undertaking a safari. The bite of the tsetse is significant (think of a large gauge needle piercing the skin) and few would not be aware of the exposure. If infected, the next stage is a localized swelling around the bite site which may look awful but actually the patient is not too concerned. This is the local multiplication phase of the parasite. Some flu-like symptoms may be experienced but with paracetamol it is likely the patients are back to a normal life a week or so later. Following that there may be no significant signs or symptoms until the trypanosome invades into the cerebral tissue and thus the 'second phase' of this disease progresses which can include many different elements including a change in personality and even severe psychological problems (schizophrenia, epilepsy etc). Without intervention that patient is destined to die. From our point of view as practitioners we need to be aware of the issues and if any patient mentions a 'sore bite' from their travels we need to take that declaration seriously and even obtain expert tropical assessment if their itinerary put them at risk. Waving this off as of little concern can condemn the patient to future misery and death.

Two Anthrax related deaths from contaminated meat in Kazo region of Uganda

<https://nilepost.co.ug/news/232679/authorities-launch-investigations-as-anthrax-claims-two-in-kazo>

This nasty bacterial disease can present with either cutaneous or gastrointestinal signs and symptoms. Certainly, avoiding undercooked meat when abroad sounds like a rather sensible approach. Typically plenty of heat is a great sterilizer.

Over 10,000 cases of Leptospirosis recorded in Sri Lanka so far in 2024

http://t.m.china.org.cn/convert/c_mGDGLwLL.html

We have 'Rats Urine Disease' as a constant problem in Europe especially after periods of dryness followed by increased rainfall which flushes any contaminated soil into the water sources. There is also a risk if cleaning golf balls retrieved from water hazards! So for our multiple tourists visiting Sri Lanka perhaps the main risk may be at the elephant sanctuary where the water is splashing about. It is definitely a diagnosis to have within the differential for any acutely ill patient.

Case of Diphyllbothrium (fish tape worm) reported in Czech Republic after meal of caviar

<https://bezpecnostpotravin.cz/prvni-vyskyt-difylobotriozy-v-ceske-republice-nakazy-vyvolane-tasemnici-skulovcem-sirokym-po-konzumaci-iker-stiky/>

Not being a caviar fan I don't seem to be able to generate any significant level of sympathy but of course the thought of a massive internal tape worm does tend to concentrate the mind and engenders more congenial thoughts consistent with the season! Of course, the disease is transmitted from a multitude of other fish (perch, pike and salmon for example) but is when they are eaten raw or undercooked that problems can arise. Infections with this tape worm can last for many years frequently with few symptoms. However exceptions occur and it needs to be remembered as a potential cause of gastrointestinal disturbance. Interestingly Diphyllbothrium infestation can also lead to a B12 deficiency resulting in a megaloblastic anaemia. Again another to add to your expanding differential diagnostic library!

Salmonella outbreak in Norway linked to sprouts continues to sicken many

<https://www.foodsafetynews.com/2024/12/more-sick-in-norwegian-salmonella-outbreak-traced-to-sprouts/>

For those of you within the '*why on earth did God create Brussel Sprouts*' cohort, you can simply print out this report to support your refusal to partake of these special nuggets, of a somewhat unusual flavour, during your Christmas activities! (Of course these are not the 'sprouts' of this Norway outbreak but let's not nit-pick!) Nevertheless, for the rest of us, we can rest easy once those creating any feast understand the benefits of heat to kill off unwanted bugs and vile visitors.

Hepatitis outbreak in Algarve (Portugal)

<https://lidadornoticias.pt/en/hepatite-a-seis-casos-no-bairro-das-pedreiras-em-beja/>

Portugal is probably one of the most popular Christmas destinations with heaps of our patients and friends trying to escape from the turmoil and climatic misery of northern Europe over the next month or two. Just being aware that Hepatitis A is a global problem transmitted through the faecal-oral route and so being sensible of personal hygiene, and also avoiding the consumption of animals whose life and habitat make the consumption of faecal matter a dietary necessity, seems like a sensible choice.

Detailed CDC report on infectious risks associated with the use of water parks

<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/73/ss/ss7308a1.htm>

And just to dampen any plans you may have had to escape to some super-doooper water park this rather long and detailed report from the US CDC on the health risks associated with these activities is definitely going to also dampen your spirits! Reports of Cryptosporidium and Giardia abound but also Shigella, E coli and Campylobacter and of course Legionnaires' make the list of possible suspects. Again, if seeing patients after the Christmas break, we all have to remember how important the geographical history is to help focus the mind and get some order into your thought processes. Remember even Santa Claus always 'makes a list'!

Major outbreak of Cryptosporidiosis in UK infects over 770 individuals

<https://www.gbnews.com/health/cryptosporidium-parasite-diarrhoea-bowel-cancer-symptoms>

But just in case any of the group who think "all this only occurs overseas" !

So, just to close, the BGTHA Board wishes each and every one of you both a superb and especially a safe time over the next few weeks.