



Department of Health

Incorporating: Health, Mental Health and Ageing

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OUR REF: ADF/10/8276

YOUR REF:

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Dear Doctor

The presence of Murray Valley encephalitis virus (MVE) has been detected in sentinel chicken flocks in northern Victoria. While no human cases have been identified, please be alert to the possibility of MVE in patients who present with a compatible clinical picture, especially those who live in or have recently visited regions in close proximity to the Murray River.

Most cases of MVE infection are asymptomatic, while mild cases present with a febrile headache or aseptic meningitis. Symptomatic infections are usually marked by acute onset, fever commonly associated with a combination of anorexia, malaise, severe frontal headache, nausea, vomiting and dizziness, with progression to obvious neurological disease such as alteration in mental state, neck stiffness, ataxia, speech disturbances and convulsions.

Collection of specimens for laboratory diagnosis of MVE and its differential diagnoses are suggested as follows:

- Two tubes of blood should be collected, one in an EDTA tube for detection of viruses, and one in a plain serum tube for serological testing. A second convalescent serum should be submitted for testing two weeks after disease onset.
- Collect at least 0.5ml of CSF in a sterile leak-proof container together with a respiratory swab in viral transport medium, and a rectal swab in viral transport medium.

All specimens should be transported chilled to the Victorian Infectious Diseases Reference Laboratory (VIDRL) as rapidly as possible, following telephone contact with the Medical Microbiologist-on-call, available Monday to Friday 0800 to 1730 hours through the VIDRL switchboard (03) 9342 2600 or outside these hours through the Royal Melbourne Hospital Switchboard (03) 9342 7000.

If specimens cannot be transported to the laboratory immediately all specimens other than blood should be stored at 4°C for periods of up to 24 hours.

Expert advice on case management can be obtained from the Victorian Infectious Diseases Service located at the Royal Melbourne Hospital (ph: 03 9342 7000).

MVE virus is a group A notifiable disease, which means that suspected cases should be notified immediately by telephone to the Department's Communicable Disease Prevention & Control Section on 1300 651 160.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely

Dr John Carnie
Chief Health Officer