

Monday 23 January 2017

## NSW Health reports first heart patient with *M chimaera* infection

NSW Health has confirmed the first *Mycobacterium chimaera* case in the state following exposure to the rare infection from open heart surgery equipment.

Last year NSW Health contacted patients who may have been exposed to the *M chimaera* infection from open heart surgery equipment used in four NSW public hospitals. The equipment, used in countries around the world, is thought to have been contaminated during manufacture.

Since then one NSW patient, a woman in her 80s who underwent surgery at Prince of Wales Hospital in 2015, has developed the infection.

NSW Chief Health Officer, Dr Kerry Chant, said the patient has since been treated with the appropriate antibiotics and is responding well.

“NSW Health responded to international advice and sent letters to patients who underwent open heart surgery between January 2012 and August 2016 at Prince of Wales, St George, The Children’s Hospital at Westmead, or Sydney Children’s Hospital Randwick. These letters informed patients about the risk, symptoms and what to do if concerned,” Dr Chant said.

“We’re asking patients to particularly watch out for the following symptoms: persistent fevers, increasing or unusual shortness of breath, and unexplained weight loss.

“When we were notified of this infection risk to patients NSW Health replaced and removed from service the machines used in the four public hospitals, issued alerts to the community and doctors, and circulated new national guidelines for the equipment.”

Dr Chant said experience overseas had shown that when an *M chimaera* case is reported in a facility it may signal an increased risk to other patients who had heart surgery in that facility.

“We’re now providing updated advice to all GPs and relevant specialists,” Dr Chant said.

“NSW Health is continuing to monitor heart surgery patients in NSW and keep abreast of international responses and advice.

“Worldwide, around 70 heart surgery patients have contracted this infection, with only two patients in Australia, including this NSW case.”

Patients seeking further details can contact the following information lines:

- Sydney Children’s Hospital Network – 02 9845 3442 (8.00am – 5.00pm, excluding weekends and public holidays)
- South Eastern Sydney Local Health District –1800 875 526 (8.00am – 5.00pm until Friday 3 February).

For further information please see the [NSW Health Fact Sheet](#).

**Media contact: NSW Health Public Affairs Unit 02 9391 9121, after-hours 02 9962 9890 or email [media@doh.health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:media@doh.health.nsw.gov.au).**