Legionellosis is a disease caused by gram negative aerobic bacteria in the genus *Legionella*. Legionellosis was first recognized and named after a 1976 outbreak of pneumonia (with 182 cases and 29 deaths) among participants of the American Legion’s convention at the Bellevue-Stratford Hotel in Philadelphia. There are two forms of legionellosis: Legionnaire’s disease and Pontiac fever. For Legionnaire’s disease, pneumonia is the most common clinical feature accompanied by other nonspecific symptoms including nonproductive cough, fever, headache and shortness of breath which begin 2 to 14 days after being exposed. Pontiac fever is a milder infection, beginning 1 to 2 days after exposure, with symptoms similar to Legionnaire’s disease but without pneumonia and usually lasts 2 to 5 days. Several diagnostic tests are available to detect the *Legionella* bacteria within the body. Risk factors for Legionnaires' disease include age (50 years of age or older), smoking, chronic heart and lung disease, cancer, renal disease, immunosuppression, and diabetes.

*Legionella* bacteria are found naturally in freshwater environments worldwide. The bacteria grow best in warm water (77°F - 107°F), like the kind found in hot tubs, air conditioning cooling towers, hot water tanks, premise plumbing systems, and decorative fountains. Legionellosis is transmitted by inhalation of aerosolized water contaminated with the bacteria. It is not airborne nor is it transmitted from person-to-person. Most cases are sporadic, but outbreaks have been reported from several different environments including cruise ships, office buildings, hotels and hospitals.

Nationally reported legionellosis incidence rates increased 4.5 times from 0.42 per 100,000 persons in 2000 to 1.89 per 100,000 in 2015. Although legionellosis cases are seen throughout the entire year, more cases were reported in summer and early fall in 2014 and 2015 versus winter and spring. From 2014 to 2015, a total of 1014 (14%) Legionnaires' disease cases were travel-associated. In Florida, 435 cases were reported in 2017 which is a 51.2% increase over the previous 5-year average incidence rate. Most of the 2017 Florida cases were hospitalized (98.4%) and 11.3% died from the infection. The majority of 2017 cases were acquired in Florida (93.8%) and were sporadic (93.7%).

References

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