SARS Update (as of 05/03/04)

On April 30, officials of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the government of China provided an update on SARS infections in that country. The outbreak, centered in Beijing and Anhui includes 5 persons confirmed as having SARS, and another 4 who have symptoms of SARS and have a history of close contact with a known case. The cases in Beijing are all receiving treatment in the same hospital in order to reduce the risk of transmission. The WHO states that "investigation of the source of the outbreak is presently focused on lapses in biosafety procedures at the National Institute of Virology. The institute was closed on 23 April and its staff were placed in quarantine."

The outbreak has extended to three generations, beginning with a 26 year old postgraduate student who worked at the National Institute of Virology in Beijing. Another researcher employed in the institute has been undergoing SARS treatment, but has not been linked to additional cases.

Two second generation cases have been linked to the graduate student: her 53 year old mother and a 20 year old nurse who provided her (the student). Five additional cases have been linked to the nurse.

No cases in this outbreak have been identified outside of China. More than 1000 people associated with the outbreaks have been quarantined.

The Florida Department of Health continues to monitor worldwide SARS activity and will provide updates as appropriate. The DOH also evaluates all requests for tests for SARS by developing a complete risk profile of each patient for whom testing is requested. The history includes travel itineraries, possible SARS exposures and assessment of close contacts. Possible exposures include contact with ill person who work in hospitals and laboratories. Requests for specific SARS information should be made to the Bureau of Epidemiology at (850) 245-4401.