Rubella – A Department of Health Case Study

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The Department of Health was recently notified of a confirmed case of rubella infection in a 35-year-old Australian born male. He had been living and working in India for the past year and had returned home to his family. He arrived in Australia on 15 July and the next day he had coryza, a blocked nose and a sore throat. On 27 July a rash appeared on his face then his trunk and he had a fever, chills and headache. One day later he had a swollen face, enlarged lymph nodes, the rash was widespread and he was sensitive to light and had aches and pain in his wrist joints. He was hospitalised for two days with improvement by 31 July.

There are still more than 60 countries with no vaccination for rubella and therefore rubella virus circulates in these countries and is commonly transmitted.

It is always worthwhile to consider your patient’s immune status when travelling or working overseas. For further information visit: http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/

Many young adult males are not immune to rubella because mass rubella vaccination commenced in 1971 and targeted school girls only. The measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccination program for all adolescents replaced the rubella vaccine program for girls in 1993/4.

People born since 1966 without documented evidence of two doses of MMR vaccine should receive two doses of Priorix® vaccine with a minimum one month spacing between each dose.

References and further reading

Victorian Department of Health-Immunisation