

Valley Pain Management McMechen, West Virginia Patient Notification Frequently Asked Questions

How did this situation get reported to the health department?

A patient developed bacterial meningitis following an epidural injection at Valley Pain Management. An epidural injection is a type of injection very close to the spinal cord and is sometimes done to relieve pain.

Following the reported illness, the health department investigated and found that the physician did not wear a surgical mask during epidural injections. Surgical masks are recommended to prevent bacteria from the healthcare provider's nose and throat from causing infections in patients during spinal procedures.

During the investigation, other infection prevention problems were also identified.

What infection prevention problems were identified?

In addition to not using a mask during epidural injections, the clinic reused syringes to enter single-use vials and medications. These single-use vials and medications were subsequently used for other patients. The investigation also identified problems with hand washing and cleaning of the procedure room.

What did the health department do about the infection prevention problems?

The clinic was verbally notified to correct identified issues immediately. A follow-up letter was sent two days later.

A follow up visit was performed six weeks later and all major issues had been addressed.

What do we know about the risks to patients of Valley Pain Management?

The West Virginia Bureau for Public Health and local health departments looked for other cases of meningitis or bacterial infection in Valley Pain Management patients. None were identified.

Prior to November 1, 2013, Valley Pain Management reused syringes to enter vials and saline bags that were used for more than one patient. While we cannot determine if these procedures caused any illnesses, it is possible that patients may have been exposed to infections.

The West Virginia Bureau for Public Health also looked for evidence of transmission of hepatitis B, C or human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) among Valley Pain Management patients, and none was identified.

The West Virginia Bureau for Public Health has repeatedly requested specific information from Valley Pain Management about patient procedures, but the clinic has refused to cooperate with the investigation.

It is not possible to know the overall risk for infection to patients of Valley Pain Management.

How are Valley Pain Management patients being notified?

A media release was sent by the West Virginia Bureau for Public Health and the State of Ohio on July 21, 2014.

DHHR has issued an administrative subpoena in an effort to obtain the clinic's patient list and is prepared to institute additional legal action if the clinic does not comply with the subpoena.

What are you recommending to patients of Valley Pain Management?

Patients who had an injection procedure at Valley Pain Management between the time the clinic opened in 2010 through November 1, 2013 should talk to their primary care provider about testing for hepatitis B, C and HIV.

What is the purpose of testing?

The purpose of testing is to identify silent infections with hepatitis B, hepatitis C and/or HIV. If a silent infection is identified, patients may benefit from counseling or treatment.

Where can patients get blood tests for hepatitis B, C and HIV?

Patients can go to their own primary care provider or West Virginia patients can contact these local health departments in West Virginia to make an appointment to be tested until 10/21/2014.

Hancock County Health Department	(304) 564-3343
Brooke County Health Department	(304) 737-3665
Wheeling - Ohio Health Department	(304) 234-3682
Marshall County Health Department	(304) 854-7840

Wetzel - Tyler Health Department

(304) 337-2001

Ohio residents can call (844) 593-5184.

Pennsylvania residents can call 1-877 PA HEALTH (877-724-3285) to arrange testing.

Do I need to be concerned about any other infections?

Hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV are the only 'silent' infections that can be spread by a small amount of contamination in a vial or syringe. Bacterial or fungal infections can also be spread, but patients typically develop symptoms within days to weeks after an injection from a syringe.

What is being done to make sure this doesn't happen again?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other partners have an injection safety campaign, called the 'One and Only Campaign.' They educate providers to use 'one syringe only one time.' You can get more information at <http://www.oneandonlycampaign.org/>

The West Virginia Bureau for Public Health will be forwarding information statewide to providers about infection prevention, including safe injection practices, following this patient notification.

What does the health department do about healthcare associated infections?

Local health departments investigate healthcare associated outbreaks with the West Virginia Bureau for Public Health. Health departments try to work collaboratively with providers and healthcare facilities to correct problems when they are identified. You can learn more about healthcare outbreaks at <http://www.dhhr.wv.gov/oeps/disease/ob/Pages/default.aspx>

Health departments also share information with healthcare providers and healthcare facilities and offer training.

What is happening with the clinic?

The West Virginia Board of Osteopathic Medicine has been made aware of this investigation.

Where can I get more information about this?

Information is available through a web page linked to: www.dide.wv.gov

You can also call: (800) 642-8244.