



June 9, 2008

Dear Sir or Madam:

As a former patient of the Desert Shadow Endoscopy Center, formerly located at 4275 Burnham Avenue, Suite 101, you are receiving this letter to inform you that based on the information and records currently available the Southern Nevada Health District has concluded its investigation into an acute case of hepatitis C associated with this clinic.

The acute case of hepatitis C that lead to this investigation was self-reported to the health district by a patient in March of 2008. Laboratory tests document this person tested negative for hepatitis C days prior to undergoing a procedure at this clinic and later developed an acute infection. Seven additional cases are associated with the Endoscopy Center of Southern Nevada. This clinic was the subject of a prior notification to more than 40,000 patients of their potential exposure to bloodborne pathogens.

While it has been determined this acute case is linked to the center there is not sufficient information at this time to determine the likely source of disease transmission. Unfortunately, this case was reported to the health district after the clinic location was closed and staff was not available for interviews with the health district and investigation team members were unable to further observe the clinic practices.

Due to the lack of documentation, the health district is encouraging you to discuss your risk for disease transmission with your physician and to pursue testing for hepatitis C, hepatitis B and HIV if you are concerned. While we cannot make a recommendation to get tested based on evidence of unsafe injection practices which may have exposed patients to the blood of other clinic patients, it is important for potentially affected patients to know their infection status.

It is unfortunate we have not been able to conclusively identify the practices that lead to a patient at this clinic being infected with hepatitis C. We do know a clinic staff person was observed reusing vials of anesthesia medication at this facility during an inspection by the Nevada State Health Division Bureau of Licensure and Certification in January 2008, and clinic records support the finding that vials of anesthesia were reused on multiple patients. However, the reuse of syringes cannot be documented at this time.

The health district is committed to continuing its efforts to further investigate this case as well as the cases associated with the Endoscopy Center of Southern Nevada, where the outbreak was first identified.

In order to complete a more thorough investigation into the events that lead to patients being infected with hepatitis C at both the Endoscopy Center of Southern Nevada and the Desert Shadow Endoscopy Center, we have developed a Hepatitis C Exposure Registry. As a patient of the Desert Shadow Endoscopy Center we are asking for your assistance in gathering more information in order to continue our investigation.

Enclosed with this letter is an enrollment form for the exposure registry. We ask that you complete this form and return it to the health district. The registry was developed to assist in the identification of patients who had procedures at the clinics, including those who are infected with the hepatitis C virus, and will allow patients who have tested positive the opportunity to learn their case classification. The registry will also include sections to allow patients to report on possible hepatitis B or HIV infections.

The registry information and enrollment forms are also available on the health district's website, www.SouthernNevadaHealthDistrict.org. In addition, enrollment forms will be available at the health district's public health centers or patients can contact the hepatitis C helpline at (702) 759-4636 (INFO) to request a form.

We understand that you and your family may have many more questions or concerns with the information you have received. For additional information, please contact the hepatitis C helpline listed above. You may also find additional information on the health district website at <http://www.southernnevadahealthdistrict.org>.

NOTA: Para obtener esta información en español llame al (702) 759-4636 o visite el sitio web www.southernnevadahealthdistrict.org.

Thank you again for your assistance and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Lawrence Sands, DO, MPH
Chief Health Officer