

NEWS AND COMMENT

VIBRIO VULNIFICUS DEATH

A 60-year-old man died on February 4 from septic shock after he lacerated his leg while collecting oysters. A full report on the case will be published in a future Public Health Bulletin. Health Department pamphlets on vibrio vulnificus are available from Public Health Units.

MARCH PHU MEETING

The March 7 Public Health Unit meeting in the level 10 conference room of the Health Department at North Sydney heard reports from the sub-committees on infectious disease and environmental health. Details will be published in the next Bulletin. After a morning meeting of Unit directors there was a general meeting at which a new sub-committee on reproductive health was formed.

CUTTING INJURIES — AND COSTS

A Sydney seminar on March 13 heard how hospitals and health care organisations in NSW could reduce workplace injuries and make immediate workers compensation savings by initiating better health management of their employees.

The seminar — Australia's health industry: reducing injuries, reducing costs — provided guidelines and case studies on how to protect health workers from hazards arising from sharp instruments, back injuries, stress, dangerous substances, shiftwork and assault. It pointed out that tackling occupational health and safety problems faced by health workers was urgent as public health care organisations faced greater requirements for accountability and private organisations grappled with the pressures of recession.

NSW Health Minister Peter Collins opened the seminar, which was organised by Sydney Hospital Occupational Health and Safety Service and Newsletter Information Services. Chief executive of the National Association of Nursing Homes and Private Hospitals, Kerry Jones, gave the keynote address on how to cost OH&S programs to ensure the best value for time and money spent.

This article has been extracted from *Lancet* in response to a request from the Infectious Diseases Special Interest Group.

The High Court in England has suggested that pertussis vaccine actually *protects* against encephalopathy — in contrast to earlier estimates that the vaccine is implicated in brain damage in 1 in 310,000 immunisations. The National Childhood Encephalopathy Study (UK 1981) was reanalysed in the light of various selection biases within that study and that the previously held results refer to an interim report.

The Canadian immunisation guide has been changed to read: "Although there may be an increased risk of acute, severe neurological illness (including encephalopathy) occurring within 72 hours of the administration of pertussis vaccine to previously healthy infants, the majority of such illnesses observed in the National Childhood Encephalopathy Study were prolonged or complex convulsions. **All such children were normal on follow-up 12-18 months later.**"

PUBLIC HEALTH EDITORIAL STAFF

The Bulletin's editorial advisory panel is as follows:

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Suggestions for improving the reporting of infectious diseases are most welcome.