

## COUNTY OF ORANGE HEALTH CARE AGENCY

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## PUBLIC HEALTH EPIDEMIOLOGY & ASSESSMENT

August 29, 2006

**TO:** To Orange County Physicians and Other Health Care Providers

RE: Additional paragonimiasis (lung fluke) cases should prompt providers to query patients with unexplained eosinophilia about raw, live, or undercooked freshwater crab consumption

On August 11, 2006, we alerted Orange County physicians and other health care providers about locally acquired paragonimiasis (lung fluke) infections associated with live freshwater crab consumption in Orange County. We continue to investigate reports of confirmed and suspect cases, and, given the popularity of this practice, are concerned that there may be additional cases that have not yet been diagnosed. Several of the cases were seen in physicians' offices and urgent care facilities with mild shortness of breath or pleuritic chest/rib pain and were found to have eosinophilia on CBC weeks to months before their actual diagnosis. After the initial case, the additional cases that have been reported have only been diagnosed after heightened awareness among physicians and patients. We encourage Orange County health care providers to query their patients with eosinophilia of unknown etiology about the possible consumption of raw, live, undercooked, pickled or salted freshwater crabs. Several of our cases had only consumed one or two of these crabs, months prior to diagnosis.

Diagnosis is made through serology for *Paragonimus* antibody or identification of *Paragonimus* ova in the stool or sputum (send for ova and parasites). Testing is available for patients who have consumed raw or undercooked freshwater crab on a case-by-case basis through Orange County Public Health. There is medication available for treatment of patients. For more information about paragonimiasis, please see our blast fax from 8/11/06 and the fact sheet for health care providers, available at <a href="http://www.ochealthinfo.com/epi/paragonimus.htm">http://www.ochealthinfo.com/epi/paragonimus.htm</a>. A fact sheet for patients and a picture of the implicated crab is also available at that website. In addition, patients may call the Health Referral Line at 1-800-564-8448 for more information.

Additional causes of eosinophilia include atopic conditions, drug reactions, fungal infections including coccidioidomycosis, other parasites, malignancy, and collagen vascular diseases. Some bacterial and viral infections can also be associated with a mild to moderate eosinophilia (<5,000 cells/µl). In general, eosinophilia of unknown etiology should be followed up.

Please report any suspect cases of paragonimiasis to Orange County Epidemiology within one (1) working day by phone (714-834-8180) or fax (714-834-8196). Please also question suspect cases about restaurants where live or raw freshwater crab was/is being served.