Update: Results of Testing for Bloodborne Virus Exposure as Recommended by the Health Department

The Santa Barbara County Public Health Department is continuing an investigation of Dr. Allen Thomashefsky’s medical office, and is recommending that former patients get tested for Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV. The Health Department has received and analyzed information associated with the laboratory test results of former patients. As of April 26, 2015, a total of 240 tests have now been reported with the following cumulative results:

- 1 patient tested positive for Hepatitis B and has been determined to be a prior, existing infection
- 6 patients have tested positive or are currently infected with Hepatitis C
  - Of these 6 patients
    - 5 of these are believed to be a new, or acute, diagnosis of Hepatitis C
    - 1 is believed to be a prior, or chronic, infection of Hepatitis C
- 0 patients have tested positive for HIV
- 233 patients are negative or not infected with Hepatitis B and C, or HIV

As part of the investigation, the Health Department looks for possible causes and for any common characteristics among these cases. Four (4) patients testing positive for Hepatitis C had injection procedures performed by Dr. Thomashefsky on the same day. There were no other commonly identified elements between these 4 patients; and 3 of the 4 patients had no other known risk factors for Hepatitis C. An important part of the ongoing investigation will be further molecular genetic testing performed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This advanced testing can help determine if the hepatitis C virus found in these infected patients share common genetic pieces and therefore are likely to come from the same source.

In November 2014, the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department was notified of a new case of hepatitis C in a person with no previous risk factors. An immediate investigation revealed that this person had undergone a procedure involving multiple injections at Dr. Thomashefsky’s medical office in Santa Barbara County. Two prompt inspections of this clinic (one announced, the other unannounced) revealed multiple infection control breaches, which led to closure of Dr. Thomashefsky’s medical office on March 19, 2015.

The infection control breaches witnessed at the office of Dr Thomashefsky have the potential to expose patients to bloodborne viruses including hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and HIV. The new findings released today bring new urgency to the Health Department’s recommendation that any patients of Dr. Thomashefsky get tested for hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV. People infected with hepatitis C often have no symptoms. Testing is the only way to know if a person is infected.

Anyone seeking more information or anyone wanting to report an abnormal outcome from an office visit to Dr. Thomashefsky can call the information line at 805-681-4373. ###