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Hepatitis plagues day-care children

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Health officials are warning of an increase in infectious hepatitis in Bexar County particularly plaguing young children attending day-care centers.

"We've had some neighborhood increases," Roger Sanchez, an epidemiologist with the San Antonio Metropolitan Health District, said.

Of the 162 hepatitis A cases in the county this year, 45 were reported in the past two months, the health district reported. Sanchez estimated there are several hundred more cases unreported.

Poor hygiene, particularly lack of hand washing by staff and children in day-care centers, has been blamed for some of the cases.

"You can't get it standing next to someone — it's not airborne," Sanchez said. "It can be prevented by good hand washing and by discouraging the sharing of food by youngsters."

Hepatitis A rarely is fatal — even manifesting itself as mild, flu-like symptoms in young children — but it can be serious in older people, many of whom are infected by children through diaper handling.

Symptoms include fever, nausea, abdominal discomfort and jaundice.

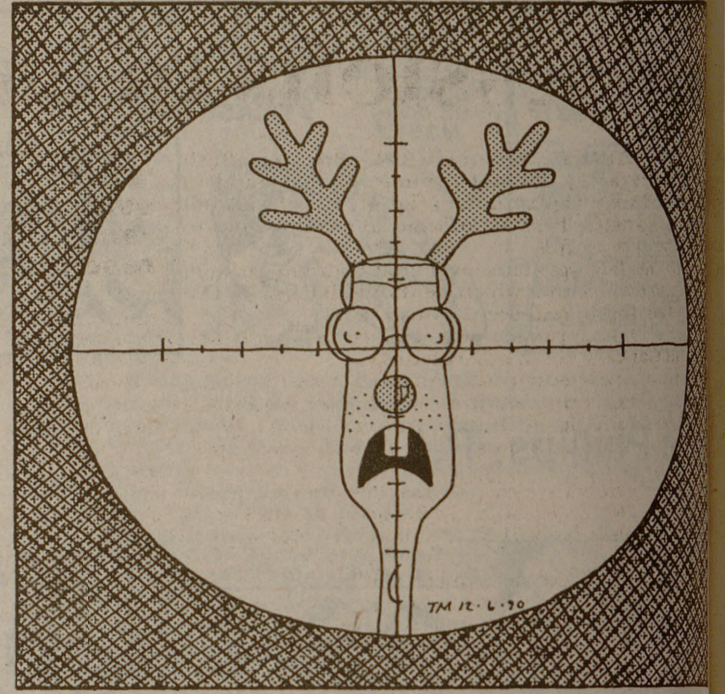
Nine recent cases in both adults and children were linked to one day-care center, Sanchez said. Health district staff have offered immunization to people there exposed to hepatitis.

Several other cases were linked to an elementary school.

Sanchez declined to identify either school.

"It's not unusual for a school to have some hepatitis cases," Sanchez said. "A lot of times, it's the children at home playing with other kids in the neighborhood." who probably go to the same school.

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Sales drowning in red tape

Inherited S&L assets cost taxpayers

WASHINGTON (AP) — The government's sale of real estate and other assets inherited from bankrupt savings and loans is drowning in red tape, costing taxpayers millions of dollars, a congressional report said Wednesday.

The report, by the staff of the House Banking Committee, acknowledged that the 16-month-old Resolution Trust Corp. "has been assigned a difficult task in cleaning up the largest financial crisis in the nation's history."

But it said the agency must develop a better sales effort if it is to succeed in the task.

"Investors and would-be homeowners have encountered innumerable stumbling blocks in their attempts to negotiate purchases of RTC-held assets," the report said. "Uncooperative property man-

agers, difficulties in obtaining current and accurate appraisals, delays in contract negotiations, deteriorating condition of assets, and a simple inability between RTC and many potential buyers to effectively communicate, have delayed or prevented the closing of countless transactions, costing the federal government millions of dollars in carrying costs while billions of dollars worth of unsold properties continue to deteriorate," it said.

"Congressional offices have been inundated with letters from frustrated investors, brokers and homeowners who have found that purchasing property from the RTC is not a simple case of arriving at mutually acceptable terms of sale, but rather involves hours of sifting through paperwork and bureaucratic red tape, often leading to

"Investors and would-be homeowners have encountered innumerable stumbling blocks in their attempts to negotiate purchases of RTC-held assets."

— congressional report

frustration and disappointment," it said.

The staff's report was released as the committee opened two days of hearings on the trust corporation. It was scheduled to hear from more than a dozen agency critics but from none of the RTC's top executives.

RTC spokesman Stephen Katsanos called the report "nonsense." From the RTC's creation in April 1989 through Sept. 30, it has sold over 493 S&Ls with \$251 billion in assets. At the end of the period, it was left with 207 institutions worth \$142 billion in assets.

"We've moved assets roughly the size of Citicorp back into the trust," he said. "I think it's been pretty productive year."

Katsanos said some buyers are frustrated because they want to negotiate a purchase at a gain-basement price rather than compete against other bidders.

"That's not what Congress is for in the legislation," he said. "There are a lot of complainants there, but there also are a lot of happy people who have bought stuff."

Study: Texas youth use less drugs than in 1988

AUSTIN (AP) — Fewer Texas youth are using less illegal drugs today than two years ago, according to a survey released Wednesday by the Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse.

But that good news was offset by some bad news, said commission Executive Director Bob Dickson. The survey also found that use of tobacco and alcohol has increased since 1988.

"And the use of these illicit, 'gateway' drugs places these young people at serious risk for later use of illicit drugs," Dickson said. "In fact, when alcohol and tobacco are included, only one-third of Texas youth remained drug-free during the 1990 school year."

However, Dickson said, "The news is generally good. It's not all good, but it's generally good."

The survey of some 110,000 secondary school students found that current use — defined as use within the past 30 days — of all illegal drugs had declined between 1988 and 1990. It said 10 percent of 1990 respondents reported having used such substances within the past month compared with 17 percent in 1988.

The study also said that current use of marijuana dropped from 12 percent to 8 percent; uppers — amphetamines, "speed" and others — dropped from 6 percent to 2 percent; downers — sedatives, tranquilizers and others — dropped from 4 percent to 1 percent, and current use of inhalants, cocaine and hallucinogens also decreased.

"Lifetime use of illicit substances

also decreased between 1988 and 1990 ... Most significantly, the percentage of Texas' secondary school students who had ever used illicit drug dropped from 39 percent in 1988 to 25 percent in 1990," the study said.

The percentage of students reporting that they had ever used marijuana fell from 32 percent in 1988 to 23 percent; use of uppers fell from 17 percent to 7 percent; use of downers dropped from 17 percent to 5 percent.

Since the 1988 survey, a number of new programs aimed at prevention have been started. Dickson said this year's results show that prevention is the right track.

"It's an indication of what we've been saying for three years — that prevention efforts do work," he said. The study said that while students appear to be responding to messages about illegal drugs, they continue to use alcohol and tobacco.

"Eighty-one percent of secondary students have drunk alcohol in their lifetime, up from 76 percent in 1988," the study said.

"Drinking is now more prevalent among groups that were among the lowest users in 1988: lifetime alcohol consumption among seventh graders rose from 59 to 69 percent among blacks it rose from 64 to 74 percent, and among females it rose from 74 to 81 percent."

The percentage of students who smoked cigarettes during the previous month increased. Among school seniors it was up from 21 percent in 1988 to 26 percent in 1990, the study said.

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