



Government of the District of Columbia
Department of Health



Center for Policy, Planning and Evaluation Administration
Division of Epidemiology – Disease Surveillance and Investigation

August 24, 2017

Health Notice for District of Columbia Healthcare Providers and Clinical Laboratories
Outbreak of Nontuberculous Mycobacterium Infections Following Cosmetic Surgery
Performed in the Dominican Republic

Summary

The purpose of this Health Notice is to increase awareness about an outbreak of travel-associated nontuberculous mycobacterium (NTM) infections. Since January 1, 2017, multiple states have identified cases of NTM surgical site infections in patients after returning from a trip to the Dominican Republic for cosmetic surgery. **We advise healthcare providers to consistently collect travel history information during the clinical evaluation of patients and to report any suspect cases of NTM skin and soft tissue infections in patients who report recent cosmetic procedures in the Dominican Republic to the DC Department of Health (DOH).**

Background

NTM are commonly drug resistant and difficult to treat. Multiple states have identified NTM surgical site infections in patients receiving cosmetic surgery in the Dominican Republic. The majority of the isolates have been identified as *Mycobacterium abscessus* and were associated with procedures performed in the Centro Internacional de Cirugia Plastica Avanzada (CIPLA), Santa Domingo, Dominican Republic. These infections may require protracted and complex antibacterial drug combinations and courses. Surgical interventions are frequently necessary adjuncts to antibacterial drug therapy. Although NTM grow well on routine bacterial culture media, clinical specimens frequently fail to exhibit growth after empiric use of common antibacterial drug therapy, particularly when swab specimens are collected instead of body fluids or tissue. Some patients with these infections may have acid fast–positive smears or tissue preparation but no organism recovered on culture.

Recommended Actions for Healthcare Providers

To minimize diagnostic delays, especially when encountering surgical site infections among medical tourists, clinicians should consider NTM infection, collect adequate specimens, and communicate suspicion to ensure correct laboratory testing is performed.

Assessing the potential for additional NTM cases among past and current patients

1. Review records and report patients with cellulitis, soft tissue infection, or cutaneous abscess in which NTM was identified (including *M. abscessus*, *M. chelonae*, *M. massiliense* and *M. fortuitum*) or whose wound specimens were acid fast smear positive only (since January 1, 2017). Physicians should inquire about previous surgical procedures in these patients and obtain NTM cultures whenever possible.
2. Consider NTM infections in the differential diagnosis for all people who have wound infections after surgery abroad, including surgery that has occurred weeks to months previously; please report these to DOH as NTM suspect cases.
3. Consider NTM infection in patients who have surgical site infections unresponsive to standard treatment; please report these to DOH as NTM suspect cases.

Reporting suspected or confirmed cases of NTM to DOH

- All suspect and confirmed cases of NTM that have a history of medical tourism to the Dominican Republic within the past year should be reported to DOH by submitting a Notifiable Disease and Condition Case Report Form.
 - Access the form using our online reporting system **DC Reporting and Surveillance Center (DCRC)**: <https://doh.dc.gov/service/infectious-diseases>.
- Please contact DOH for additional guidance, including regarding sample collection and consulting the CDC

Additional Information and Resources

- CDC Travel Notice: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/alert/medical-tourism-dominican-republic>

Please contact the DC DOH Division of Epidemiology–Disease Surveillance and Investigation for more information:

Phone: 202-442-8141 (8:15am-4:45pm) | 1-844-493-2652 (after-hours calls)

Fax: 202-442-8060 | Email: doh.epi@dc.gov