Is Legionnaire’s Disease a real threat, one victim, a Cath Lab Nurse (RN), tells her story:

It was a relaxing soak in a hot tub on a romantic trip to a beachfront hotel in Marina. Little did Stacy Intille know it would almost cost her life. Five days after returning to her Sacramento home in September 2001, the registered nurse fell ill with flu-like symptoms. Within days, she was admitted to the intensive care unit and placed on a ventilator with severe pneumonia.

Eventually, she was diagnosed with Legionnaire's disease, an often-fatal illness. It would take her months to recover. Knowing the incubation period for Legionella bacteria is two to 10 days, Intille and her doctors traced her illness to her stay at the Marina Dunes Resort, where Intille, 37, and her boyfriend had soaked in a private "soft tub" on the balcony of their suite.

Tests showed that the same Legionella bacteria strain that had infected Intille's lungs was growing in the jet pipes of the resort's tub. An outraged Intille also learned that her illness was avoidable.

According to a subsequent lawsuit, the Monterey County Environmental Health Department had ordered the resort's owner, John King of King Ventures in San Luis Obispo, to remove the unchlorinated tubs five months before Intille's visit, after it learned of the tubs' presence in the inn's rooms.

King refused, according to the lawsuit, arguing the soft tubs were unregulated "drain and fill" tubs. He did not return repeated phone calls from The Herald. Intille, who apparently breathed in the deadly bacteria via jet-fizzed water droplets, settled her suit against King for nearly $1 million in October. Now she's on an evangelical mission to educate state health officials and the public about the dangers of improperly maintained spas and the recreational water illnesses they can spread. "I feel that because I lived through this, my level of obligation as a nurse and survivor is to get the information out there that there is this risk, especially for older folks," said Intille…

"I'm trying to balance public health issues with making sure (King) comes into compliance in a reasonable time frame," said Curt Batson, San Luis Obispo County environmental health director. "There's a cost involved and I want to be reasonable here. In the 32 years I've been in this business, I've only heard of one case of (spa-related) Legionnaire's disease." (italics are mine)

Evidently the San Luis Obispo County environmental health director did not read the plethora of information available on the subject – the cases of LD are legion and worldwide.

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