

Torrevieja Legionella outbreak 2005

14 legionella cases confirmed in Torrevieja

By: valencialife.net T

The Health Conselleria of the Valencian Government has confirmed that there are fourteen cases of legionella confirmed in Torrevieja, a vast number of whom are foreigners.

Of the fourteen, ten are in hospital, two in intensive care, two are being treated at home whilst a fifteenth case is still under analysis.

It is believed that the cases came about due to a problem with the local water purification plant, and as a preventative measure all the fountains of the town have been cordoned off and a decree has been issued preventing watering by spraying.

In early December 2005, the Comunidad Valenciana public health authorities detected an outbreak of legionnaires' Disease in Torrevieja on the east coast of Spain.

Legionnaires' Outbreak In Torrevieja – Shopping Centre Believed To Be Source

By Gemma Quinn (gemma@theleader.info (Published: 12/12/2005 Edition No.: 88)) **Five Britons are among those in the Vega Baja and San Jaime hospitals being treated for Legionnaires' Disease following an outbreak in Torrevieja.**

A total of 20 cases have been confirmed at time of going to print but the number is expected to rise due to the incubation period of 10 to 12 days.

The outbreak was confirmed on Monday 5th December when ten cases were reported. Since then a total of nine teams of experts including cartographers, epidemic experts, environmental technicians and analysts, supported by medical teams, have worked to locate the source. It is widely believed that the Habaneras shopping centre is the source, although it has not been officially named and on Wednesday they announced they were closing down and disinfecting their refrigeration units. As a preventative measure the Town Hall has also been ordered to stop all ornamental fountains in the area and to limit irrigation. The Ministry of Health has assured the public that it has made 450 inspections and taken 50 samples to be analysed in different areas of Torrevieja since the recent cases of Legionnaires were discovered. The general director of Public Health, Manuel Escolano, said in a press conference in the Town Hall of Torrevieja that the Valencian Government has activated a vigilance network to watch out for new cases of the illness in the Vega Baja area and he assured that the outbreak is now under control.

The Leader Reports:

On Monday 5th December an outbreak of Legionnaires Disease was confirmed in Torrevieja when ten cases were reported. That figure steadily rose in the coming weeks as officials traced the source to the Habaneras Centre.

Now, two families tell their story having contracted the disease; their shock at being diagnosed with Legionnaires and their long recovery that lies ahead.

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Wayne Evans from Cardiff had been on the Costa Blanca from the 26th to 30th November visiting his parents. After returning home it was some four days later when he started to feel unwell. "I felt like I had the flu coming but felt really ill. At the hospital I was sent home with it and it wasn't until a few days later when my father called to tell me about the Legionnaires and two days later they did the test and said I also had it."

At 35 Wayne is quite a young case with it normally affecting middle aged to elderly men and especially smokers and people with chest problems. Wayne explained that his consultant informed him that Legionnaires is not so much rare but it is very difficult to diagnose with symptoms similar to the flu and pneumonia.

Wayne says he was shocked to be informed that he had caught Legionnaires, especially from a visit to the shopping centre and it has left him exhausted. "I was in hospital from the Friday to the Tuesday. I was having pains in my chest all the time, I really thought I was having a heart attack. I'm just more tired now as have not slept since I've had it. I've been told it can months to completely recover."

Rita Senior spent Christmas and New Year by her husband's hospital bed after he contracted Legionnaires Disease from a visit to the Habaneras Shopping Centre. Rita says the worst thing is she feels guilty for his illness as she dragged him along to the shops. She went in to a store to exchange an item as 59 year-old Robert waited outside. In those few brief minutes he caught the Legionella pneumophila bacteria and has since spent five weeks in hospital.

The couple, who have a home in La Florida, had returned to the UK for a pre-Christmas visit and it was here that Robert became ill. "He had been a bit unwell on the flight over and the doctor originally said it was a kidney problem and then it came up as pneumonia and then when they found out it was Legionnaires public health became involved. When they got confirmation from the Spanish authorities a public health officer visited me in the hospital and asked where we had been. At that point we did not think of the Habaneras but then she returned with a map of the shopping centre asking exactly where we'd been."

Rita and Robert had planned to spend Christmas in Spain but Rita had to return alone to tie up some loose ends before returning to Rochdale to be with her husband. "He did come out Christmas Eve but he was taken back to hospital on Christmas Day, he was literally dying before my eyes."

After weeks of looking like he was on the mend and then having more setbacks and having to change his medication Robert did leave hospital on Friday and is staying with family in the UK whilst Rita has had to return to the Costa Blanca. "He is still very weak and has lost a lot of weight and can't walk around much. He has to visit outpatients once a week for the next six weeks. It is just shocking to think that from that one brief shopping trip he has been so ill."

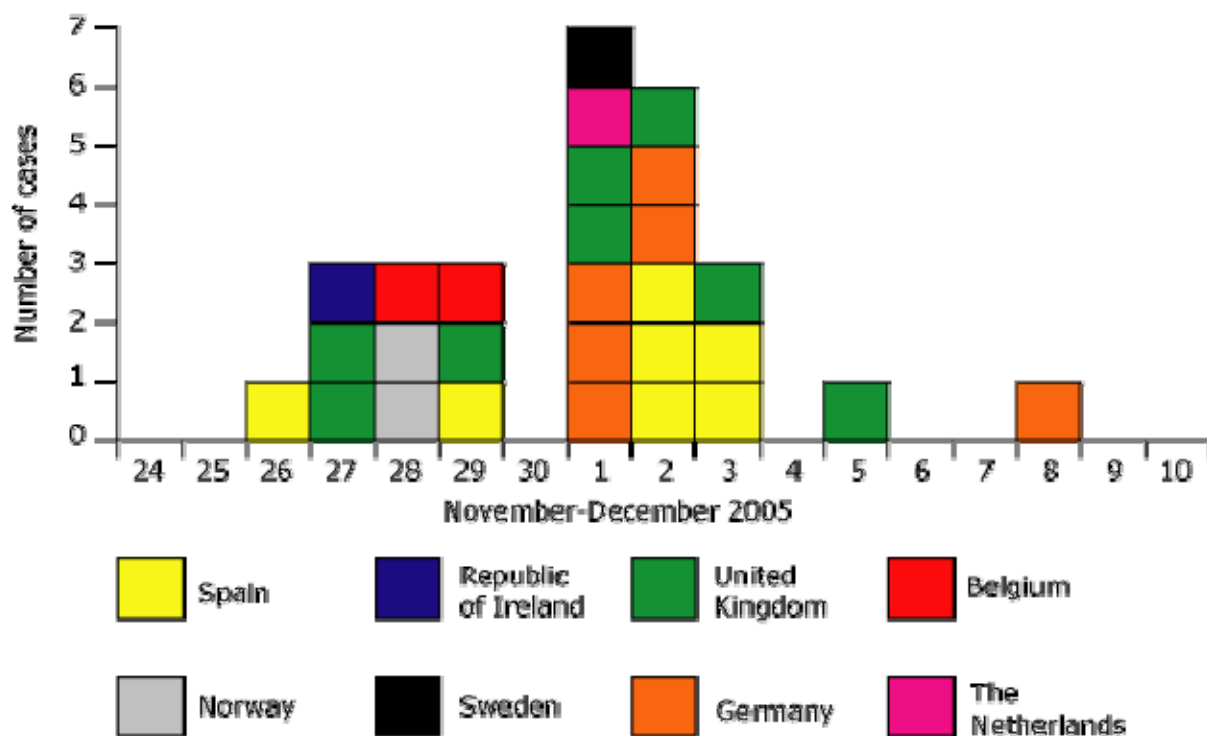
Rita is now looking for other families who caught Legionnaires Disease from this latest outbreak in Torrevieja to come forward to discuss how they can go about looking at claiming some form of compensation.

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Eurosurveillance 22 December 2005

Twenty eight cases have so far been reported, all diagnosed by detection of urinary antigen. Twenty five cases were in men and 3 were in women. The average age was of 65 years (range 47 to 82 years). Twenty one of the 28 cases were in foreign nationals from 7 different countries (8 from the UK, 6 from Germany, 2 from Belgium, 2 from Norway, and 1 from each of Ireland, Sweden and the Netherlands), who all spend most of the year in Torre Vieja or in towns near Torre Vieja [Figure]. Many foreign nationals own or rent homes in this area, and may live here for several months of the year. These 28 cases were all diagnosed in Spain, and the European Surveillance Scheme for Travel Associated Legionnaires' Disease (EWGLINET, http://www.ewgli.org/scientific_info/scientific_info.asp) is collecting information on additional cases detected in other countries that appear to be linked with the outbreak.

Figure. Legionnaires' disease outbreak in Torre Vieja, Spain, November-December 2005. Distribution of cases by onset and country of origin.



Illness onset dates were between 26 November and 8 December 2005, with symptoms of pneumonia (100%), fever (96%), muscular pain (55%), diarrhoea/vomiting (44%) and confusion (52%). All of the patients have recovered.