

Legionnaires' babies 'critical but stable'

By Marianna Pissa

THE THREE infants on the respirator in the intensive care unit of the Makarios Hospital diagnosed with Legionnaires' disease yesterday remained critical but stable.

Head of Makarios Hospital's paediatric department Dr Andreas Hadjidemetriou yesterday said that "we are in a stabilised course... the three infants that continue to be on the respirator continue to be stable but critical and have not yet given clear signs of improvement".

Hadjidemetriou added that the other babies receiving treatment but not on the respirator also seemed to be stable and in a relatively good condition. "I am not surprised that they did not show any signs of improvement, as the pathophysiology of the disease takes days to be changed.

"Despite the proper treatment, more than a week is needed for signs of clear improvement to start once the lung will start recuperating from the pneumonia created by the bacteria."

Regarding the condition of the three infants on the respirator, Hadjidemetriou said that "one is more critical than the others and in order to be properly oxygenated, we have the baby on the machine with very high needs".

Hadjidemetriou said that "we who work in intensive care units are always optimistic and never lose our confidence that we will succeed, knowing that both the gravity is certainly great and that they need great help; in particular a little baby on the respirator has to be properly monitored, and frequently shows a drop in the oxygen level intake. It is a critical situation and a delicate balance."

Regarding the two specialists who arrived from Israel on Tuesday, Hadjidemetriou said that, "because an epidemic of 11 cases involving infants from the same place is shocking for Cyprus, it creates many legitimate concerns from the general public and the parents themselves, and we called on the doctors to hold a meeting so we can hear their views and suggestions and to determine if any one of the babies might have to be taken to Israel to receive enhanced treatment.

"The Israeli doctors have examined all the infants, saw the treatment administered and said that they themselves had come across two similar incidents in the past. The Israelis said they could not offer anything more than what is already being done. They approved of the treatment given and we feel more assured that we are doing the right thing.

"We know the disease, we know the bacteria, we know the treatments, we have the medicine, we have the tools, the children are being treated and from now on we are just waiting," he said adding that "the Israeli doctors said that we should not expect immediate results and may need more than a week for the treatment to be completed and have the first positive signs of improvement."

All eleven babies diagnosed with Legionnaires' were born at the Hippocraton clinic between December 17 and December 27. One of the newborns infected with the disease died on Tuesday morning.

The state's Health Services will deliver the first results of the lab tests carried out on samples taken from the Hippocraton in the next five days.

The Hippocraton has suspended the maternity ward's operations until the tests figure out where the infection came from.

Copyright © Cyprus Mail 2008