

Alfred Health GP News

Welcome to the February edition of Alfred Health GP news.

We welcome your feedback and suggestions.

Contact us for any queries

on 9076 2620, or email us at gp.liaison@alfred.org.au.

Mycobacterium chimaera and patients having had cardiac bypass surgery involving prosthetic devices

The Alfred have contacted patients who have had cardiac bypass surgery involving prosthetic devices (including cardiac valves) at The Alfred between July 2011 and June 2016. This is to advise them that there is a small risk of infection due to *Mycobacterium chimaera* that has been linked to a world-wide contamination of a particular model of heater-cooler unit.

What is the situation?

There have been reports of surgical site infections with an unusual mycobacterial species, *Mycobacterium chimaera*, in patients that have had cardiac surgery. *M chimaera* is an environmental non-tuberculous mycobacteria (NTM) related to *M avium/intracellulare* (MAC).

Investigations have linked infections with contaminated heater cooler devices used in cardiac bypass surgery. These have involved open cardiac procedures where medical devices have been implanted, such as cardiac valves.

Globally, less than 100 infections have been described. No cases have been reported in Victoria, and three cases have been reported in Australia to-date.

Like many other hospitals, The Alfred used the implicated heater cooler units for several years, beginning in 2008; they were decommissioned in June 2016. Water from inside the old machines tested positive for *M chimaera*.

As only a small number of cases have been identified globally, the risk to individual patients of NTM infections is thought to be very low.

What should you look for?

We have advised patients to contact The Alfred if they have symptoms suggestive of infection. Infection with non-tuberculous mycobacteria should be considered in patients with surgical site infection or unexplained febrile illnesses who have had cardiac surgery. Infections have presented up to five years after surgery.

In some cases, infection with *Mycobacterium chimaera* has been disseminated. In these cases, presenting syndromes have included fever of unknown origin, splenomegaly, arthritis, osteomyelitis, bone marrow involvement with cytopenia, chorioretinitis, cerebral vasculitis, pneumonitis, myocarditis, hepatitis, and nephritis. Some patients have been misdiagnosed as having sarcoidosis or other granulomatous disease.

What should I do if I suspect a case?

The diagnosis of NTM infections requires specialised microbiological techniques, including mycobacterial blood cultures, imaging of prosthetic material and other regions as indicated clinically and biopsies of potential sites of infection.

Please contact the infectious diseases registrar on-call at The Alfred on 03 9076 2000 if you suspect infection in your patient, or if you have any questions. An information line for patients has been established at The Alfred on 03 9076 2820.

What else is being done?

We have confirmed that no cases of *M. chimaera* have been diagnosed in patients at Alfred Health to-date. New heater cooler units were installed in June 2016, and have been tested to ensure they are not contaminated with NTM.

Referrals to the Bariatric service at The Alfred

Please note that referrals to the Bariatric service at The Alfred require a completed [Bariatric Screening Assessment form](#). Please fax a referral to a named specialist of your choice and the completed assessment form to 9076 0113.

More information about the Bariatric Clinic, including referral guidelines, can be found [here](#).

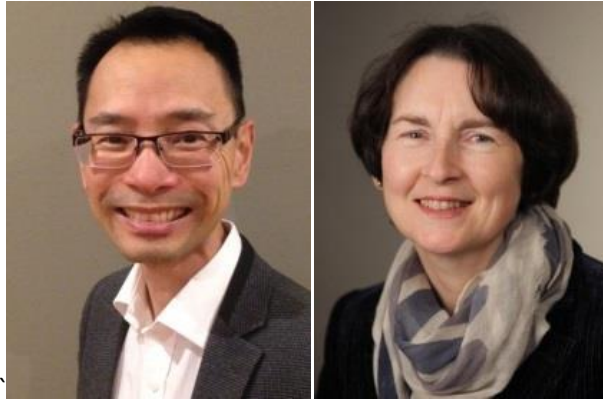
The Alfred Allergy Symposium

The Allergy, Asthma & Clinical Immunology Service at The Alfred is the largest adult service of its kind in Australia, accepting referrals from across Victoria. GPs are invited to attend **The Alfred Allergy Symposium**, to be held on Saturday 18th March 2017, 8:30am – 4:00pm in the AMREP Seminar Room, Alfred Hospital.

The day will take the form of a workshop with a major focus on interactive case discussions of important allergic presentations, developed with GP input.

Topics will include: Aero-allergy, thunderstorm asthma, drug allergy, food allergy, paediatric allergy, anaphylaxis & venom allergy, allergic skin conditions, occupational & environmental allergy.

The convenors are A/Prof Mark Hew and Prof Robyn O'Hehir, and presenters include A/Prof Robert Stirling, Dr Celia Zubrinich, Dr Robert Puy, Dr Julian Bosco, Dr Ryan Hoy, Dr Sam Mehr, and Dr Joy Lee.



Convenors A/Prof Mark Hew and Prof Robyn O'Hehir

The cost is \$180, and includes lunch and a course booklet. Register now for the early bird cost of \$150 (ends 10th February 2017.)

Accreditation will be sought from the RACGP for 40 category one points.

You can find further information and register [here](#).

GP Liaison at Alfred Health – we're here to help!



Our GP Liaison team – Dr Josie Samers and Tracey O'Connell – are here to assist you in navigating Alfred Health. Whether it's a missing discharge summary, assistance with getting an outpatient appointment or suggestions on how we can do things better, we are here to help. Our office is attended on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays; phone 9076 2620 or email us gp.liaison@alfred.org.au.



If you do not wish to receive this newsletter please email us at gp.liaison@alfred.org.au.