May 23, 2000

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Dr. McQuigge would like to acknowledge and extend his thanks to the Walkerton, Hanover and Owen Sound Hospitals for the great work that has been done and continues to be done with the outbreak of E. coli 0157.

1. The majority of cases started showing symptoms on Wednesday, May 17, Thursday, May 18, Friday, May 19th

2. Incubation Period for E. coli 0157: range 2-8 days after exposure (majority are ill 2-4 days after exposure)

3. Bulk of Cases: live in Walkerton or have recently visited Walkerton

4. We believe the exposure to E. coli 0157 likely occurred between Friday, May 12th and Monday, May 15th, 2000

5. Number of cases: 160 documented cases of diarrhea that have been treated at area hospitals in Walkerton, Hanover and Owen Sound. In addition, there have been about 400 calls to those hospitals from adults and children with diarrhea.

6. Number hospitalized: 11 people

7. Water Supply: PUC residual chlorine tests initially indicated that the water supply was secure and that there were no known operational problems. However, given the number of people ill, a Boil Water Advisory was issued on May 21, 2000 at 1:30 PM. Ministry of Health bacterial analysis tests, reported Tuesday, May 23, 2000, showed E. coli contamination in the water supply. We have asked the Ministry of Environment to provide a full report on the operation of the Walkerton water system.

8. Organism suspected is E. coli 0157 – We have preliminary and confirmed laboratory culture results on 9 individuals with 0157.

9. Typical Symptoms: diarrhea, ranging from non-bloody to bloody, may or may not vomit. Usually clears in 2-3 days. The concern is 7-10% of people with E. coli 0157 may develop kidney complications. This is especially a concern in the very young and the elderly. These people may require emergency medical care

We are advising anyone under the age of 5 years of age who drank the Walkerton water and contracted diarrhea to get blood tests every 2 days until the end of this week to test their blood and kidney function.
The importance of handwashing should be emphasized in people who have had this illness as they may shed bacteria up to 3 weeks after the start of symptoms. Handwashing after using the bathroom will help prevent the spread of this disease to people around them.

10. What have we as the Bruce Grey Owen Sound Health Unit done?

- Team since Friday has been investigating
- Stool cultures sent – first positive one on Sunday
- Hospitals notified and working with Hanover, Walkerton, Owen Sound, London and Toronto
- Ministry of Health notified twice and Gail Urr and Chief MOH involved.
- Concerns about enough staffing for treatment
- Federal epidemiologist coming tomorrow to put data together
- Public Health Labs in London and Toronto on alert and processing samples
- Investigating cases and particularly those under 5 years of age
- Have driven water and stool samples to London Public Health lab on Sunday and Monday
- Advised both school boards