



Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention (CDC)
Atlanta GA 30333

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Mr. Patrick J. McConnon
Executive Director
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists
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Atlanta, Georgia 30341-4015

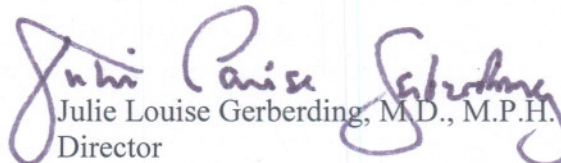
Dear Mr. McConnon:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists' (CSTE) position statement 04-ID-08 entitled "Meningococcal Serogroup Surveillance." I agree that the serogroup-specific surveillance for meningococcal disease is important, especially with the imminent licensure of new meningococcal conjugate vaccines. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) anticipates the licensure of the first new meningococcal conjugate vaccine in early 2005 and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices is in the process of developing recommendations for its use. Over the next five years, CDC expects that other new meningococcal vaccines will also become available. Since these vaccines will be licensed based on immunogenicity, surveillance data will be critical to evaluate their field efficacy.

CDC will continue to provide technical assistance in both epidemiologic evaluation of endemic meningococcal disease and outbreaks as well as in laboratory evaluation of *Neisseria meningitidis*. At the Emerging Infections Program sites, all isolates of *N. meningitidis* are sent to CDC for reconfirmation of serogroup and molecular sub-typing. In the past year, we have identified discrepancies in identification of serogroups using standard slide agglutination and we are working to identify the problems and resolve them. This issue is obviously of critical importance as the current and soon-to-be available vaccines are serogroup-specific. CDC is also in the process of developing and evaluating serogroup-specific polymerase chain reaction diagnostics for meningococcal disease. CDC is dedicated to improving laboratory diagnosis of meningococcal disease by providing guidance and participating in training programs for public health laboratories.

CDC applauds the efforts of CSTE along with the state, territorial, and local health departments in enhancing surveillance and looks forward to other opportunities to support those efforts.

Sincerely,


Julie Louise Gerberding, M.D., M.P.H.
Director