

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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KDHE, Hays Medical Center Notifying Patients of Potential Hepatitis C Exposure

TOPEKA—The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) and HaysMed in Hays, Kan., are working jointly to notify patients who underwent cardiac catheterization from May 24, 2010, to Sept. 22, 2010, of potential exposure to hepatitis C.

The U.S. Attorney for the District of New Hampshire announced yesterday that David Kwiatkowski was arrested and charged with obtaining controlled substances by fraud and tampering with a consumer product. According to an affidavit filed in federal court in New Hampshire, Kwiatkowski allegedly engaged in drug diversion and infected patients with hepatitis C while employed at Exeter Hospital in New Hampshire.

Due to the fact that Kwiatkowski worked as a contract radiology technician in the HaysMed cardiac catheterization laboratory from May 24, 2010, to Sept. 22, 2010, HaysMed and KDHE are working together to notify all patients who were treated at the cardiac catheterization lab during this time and recommend they receive testing for hepatitis C. Only those patients who underwent cardiac catheterization procedures between May 24, 2010, and Sept. 22, 2010, at HaysMed were potentially put at risk.

“We understand patients and their loved ones may be very concerned about this situation. HaysMed and KDHE are working collaboratively on this investigation,” said KDHE Secretary and State Health Officer Robert Moser, MD. “I would like to reassure the public that we have no reason to be concerned about additional risks to the public. The events in question occurred approximately two years ago.”

Approximately 460 patients had procedures at the HaysMed cardiac catheterization laboratory during this time period. Those patients who were potentially exposed at HaysMed are being contacted by mail with information on how to receive free testing for hepatitis C through KDHE and who to contact to answer questions and address concerns.

A special telephone hotline has been established at HaysMed for patients who are concerned about potential exposure to hepatitis C. Concerned patients can speak with a nurse by calling 877-261-7140. The hotline will be available the following hours:

- Friday, July 20 from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m.
- Saturday, July 21, and Sunday, July 22 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Monday, July 23 through Friday, July 27 from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- After Monday, July 30 from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

According to State Epidemiologist Charles Hunt, hepatitis C is a virus that is passed through blood and affects the liver. Approximately 2,000 confirmed cases are reported in Kansas each year. Only about one in five persons who become infected with hepatitis C virus initially becomes ill, with symptoms ranging from a mild illness to more severe disease. Most persons with hepatitis C virus develop a chronic infection, which is a serious disease that can cause long-term health problems. There is no vaccine against hepatitis C virus. For additional information on hepatitis C, visit the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at <http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/C/index.htm>.

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