Clinician Fact Sheet: West Nile Virus

Clinical Presentation
- 80% of infected people have no symptoms
- 20% of infected people have a febrile illness lasting 14 days
- About 1:150 people who are antibody positive will develop neuroinvasive disease: meningitis, encephalitis, polio-like acute flaccid paralysis, muscle weakness, ataxia, and seizures
- People over 50 years old are 10 times more likely to have neuroinvasive disease
- People over 80 years old are 43 times as likely to have neuroinvasive disease
- Mortality from neuroinvasive disease is about 9%

Differential Diagnosis
- Infections causing meningoencephalitis include enterovirus, SLE, WEE, herpes simplex, mycoplasma, coccidioidomycosis, tuberculosis, and bacterial disease

Who Should Be Tested for WNV?
- Patients with acute neurologic disease (aseptic meningitis, encephalitis, acute flaccid paralysis, or any unexplained neurologic disease of recent onset)
- Any febrile patient at the discretion of the patient’s physician

Laboratory Testing
- Order WNV IgM in blood and/or cerebrospinal fluid
  - 90% with WNV develop serum IgM by day 8 of fever
  - 99% with CNS disease will have CSF IgM antibodies on presentation
- Arizona State Lab will test WNV IgM in blood or CSF from hospitalized patients with acute neurologic disease and any serum from a febrile patient at the discretion of the patient’s physician.
- If you suspect a mosquito-borne illness in a patient with no travel history outside Arizona, you should consider ordering IgM for both WNV and SLE. If the patient’s exposure history supports ordering the arbovirus encephalitis antibody profile, you should be aware that the profile does not include WNV IgM, which needs to be ordered separately.

Treatment
- There is no specific treatment for WNV infection.
- Clinicians may wish to enroll their patients with severe disease in experimental WNV specific therapeutic medication trials.

Report
- Notify your local or county health department of suspected cases of WNV.

For More Information
- Recorded Hotline: Metro Phoenix 602-364-4500; Statewide 800-314-9243
- ADHS website at www.westnileaz.com
- CDC website at www.cdc.gov/westnile CDC West Nile Virus Homepage

Arizona Department of Health Services~ Vector-Borne & Zoonotic Disease (602) 364-4562 Revised 07/2008