
Workshop Summary

Borna Disease Virus: A Veterinary and Public Health Problem?

March 23–24, 2000

Wales, United Kingdom (UK)

Borna disease virus (BDV), which is endemic in parts of Europe, infects a broad range of species and causes a rare meningoencephalitis in horses and sheep. Several reports have suggested that infection with the virus may be associated with certain neuropsychiatric disorders in humans; however, the methods used in these reports and the significance of the findings are controversial.

The Public Health Laboratory Service, Health and Safety Executive; the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food; the Welsh Development Agency; and the Wales Innovation Relay Centre organized a Workshop on Borna Disease Virus, to review information on the diagnosis, pathology, and epidemiology of BDV in humans and animals. Attending the workshop were 66 delegates from 9 countries, including Hong Kong, Australia, and the United States, as well as the disease-endemic countries of Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. Participants discussed the significance of recent findings for veterinary and public health policy in the United Kingdom and addressed certain questions: Is BDV present in United Kingdom animal populations? Is there clinical disease compatible with Borna disease in animals in the United Kingdom? Are human populations in the United Kingdom likely to be exposed, and if so is there any evidence that exposure could lead to clinical illness? Discussion was intended to provide guidance for veterinary and public health policymakers in developing surveillance and research programs.

The workshop reviewed the history of BDV, which has been recognized since the early

1800s, and examined evidence for the presence of clinical disease in horses in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and Liechtenstein. Data were also presented indicating that clinical BDV infection is present in domestic cats in Sweden and the United Kingdom. With regard to BDV infection of humans, workshop participants concluded that BDV is a potential zoonosis, but that further validation and harmonization of diagnostic tests are needed and can be achieved through collaboration between international laboratories.

Full proceedings of this workshop, including a transcript of the roundtable discussion, will be posted later this year at <http://www.cdsc.wales.nhs.uk>.

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Upcoming Events

Frontline Health-Care Workers Conference “Partnerships in Prevention”

August 6-8, 2000

Marriott Hotel

Washington, D.C.

Topics to be covered at the conference include Science and Technology for Protecting Health-Care Workers, Advances in HIV and Hepatitis B and C, Postexposure Prophylaxis, Safety in Animal Research and Treatment, Device and Technology Regulations, Approaches for Accident Analysis in Hospitals, and Policy and Economics for Protecting Health-Care Workers. For more information, call 847-566-4566.