VERBATIM

'What makes this disaster so unusual in our frame of reference is that in many cases, the storm and its aftermath tore apart almost everything a child might have held dear and found stabilizing: friends, relatives, pets, home, school, pictures, trophies, church or synagogue, and Little League team.'

Dr. Michele S. Jellinek, p. 33

Cryptosporidiosis Fading In N.Y. Water Park Area

BY MICHELE G. SULLIVAN
Mid-Atlantic Bureau

Although a health department investigation was continuing at press time, new cases of gastrointestinal illness linked to exposure at a New York water park appeared to be leveling off, officials said.

As of this writing, 4,000 reports of persons with gastrointestinal illness—728 of which were confirmed *Cryptosporidium* infection—had been reported in 37 New York counties as well as New York City. However, the numbers have remained stable and the outbreak has tapered off.

"Many of those who have reported illness have fully recovered, and our investigation is ongoing," said Jeffrey Hammond, M.D., spokesperson for the New York State Department of Health.

"New onset of illness directly connected to the Seneca Lake spray park attraction is no longer occurring, and many people who reported illness have fully recovered," State Health Commissioner Antonia C. Novello, M.D., said in a statement. "Our priority is to prevent any further spread of gastrointestinal illness from person to person."

With the beginning of a new school year, person-to-person transmission could increase, especially among younger students who don't reliably practice good hand washing, Dr. Novello said.

The state health department issued letters to all schools and day care centers in the 35 affected counties, stressing the precautionary measures people should take to help stop any further spread of gastrointestinal illness.

"We want to stress that students, parents, and teachers should practice good hygiene and that those who are ill should refrain from attending school or day care, so they can recover more quickly and avoid getting others sick," Dr. Novello said.

She recommended the following measures to avoid disease spread:

► The school nurse should reinforce the need for students and staff to report any gastrointestinal illness to the nursing office at the first sign of such.

► Students and staff who are experiencing gastrointestinal illness should stay home from school until symptoms resolve.

► Students and staff should thoroughly wash hands after using restrooms and before handling food for themselves or others.

► Elementary grade students may need verbal reminders or staff supervision when washing hands.

► Schools should ensure that there are adequate supplies of liquid soap and paper towels for hand washing. Since waterless hand cleansers are not as effective in removing the *Cryptosporidium* parasite from hands, soap and water are preferred for hand washing.

► Schools should ensure restroom cleanliness is maintained.

The outbreak began in June, when people began reporting symptoms consistent with cryptosporidiosis: diarrhea, abdominal cramping, nausea, vomiting, fever, headache, and loss of appetite. A state health department investigation identified the source of infection as the "Sprayground" water feature at Seneca Lake State Park in Monroe County.

The parasite was found in two underground water storage tanks that supplied the water park's spray features, said Dr. Hammond. The park closed for the season on August 15. ■