



Bradley A. Connor, MD
Medical Director

Myron Levin, MD
University of Colorado School of Medicine
4200 East Ninth Ave C0227
Denver, CO 80262

February 7, 2005

RE: DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS ON HEPATITIS B IMMUNIZATION

Dear Dr. Levin:

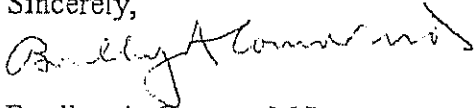
I have recently had the opportunity to read the ACIP draft statement on hepatitis B immunization. As a travel medicine physician, this issue directly impacts the patients in my area of practice, and I would like to offer my comments on the statement.

The ACIP draft statement recommends that international travelers to areas of high or intermediate hepatitis B endemicity who will have close contact (defined as sexual or daily contact) with the local population or are likely to seek medical, dental, or other treatment in local facilities receive hepatitis B vaccine prior to travel. However, the most frequently documented potential risk factors for travel-related hepatitis B infection, which are casual sexual activity, medical and dental care, and household exposure in expatriate communities, may not be anticipated by travelers. It would therefore serve patients well to recommend hepatitis B vaccine to all international travelers, regardless of whether they anticipate being exposed.

Another concern I have with the draft statement is that it recommends hepatitis B immunization on the basis of risk, leaving unprotected a population who, at the time of evaluation, either did not possess or were not perceived to possess an appropriate risk factor for hepatitis B infection. In my practice, I frequently encounter travelers who do not have enough time to complete a hepatitis B immunization schedule prior to departure. This type of last minute travel is becoming quite common in our increasingly global society. One way to address the deficit of protection against hepatitis B in international travelers is to simply recommend age-based universal hepatitis B vaccination in adults, in addition to the existing universal recommendation for infants, children, and adolescents below the age of 19 years.

Thank you for considering my opinions regarding this matter. I hope that my comments will help to encourage the ACIP to consider revision of the draft statement on hepatitis B immunization to include the recommendation for age-based universal hepatitis B vaccination for adults.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bradley A. Connor, M.D.", written in a cursive style.

Bradley A. Connor, M.D.

Medical Director

The New York Center for Travel and Tropical Medicine