Unusually High Lead Levels Found in an Indian Medication

Local physicians cautioned to address medical and health supplements with patients.

LOS ANGELES – One case of severe lead poisoning in a Los Angeles County Asian Indian adult has prompted the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services to issue a warning to clinicians and providers regarding lead in the Indian Ayurvedic pharmaceutical medication, “Pushpadhanwa.” Two unrelated cases were also recently identified in San Jose, CA. Pushpadhanwa is a generic medication used for hormonal treatments and prescribed in Ayurvedic medicine. Lead ash is one of the primary components of this medication. Pushpadhanwa is a small brown pill and has the imprint “DSL” (Shree Dhootapapeshwar Ltd.).

The individuals obtained the medications in India. Two samples of the medications were analyzed in San Jose by M.A.C.S. Lab, Inc, an American Industrial Hygiene Association accredited laboratory; the lead content for one pill was 73,900 parts per million (PPM) and the other was 78,000 PPM. In addition, the Los Angeles County’s Public Health Laboratory tested a third medication and found it to have a lead content of 12,400 PPM. County health officials say that there are no safe levels of lead in either an adult or a child’s body.

“With the discovery of these three cases, we felt the need to advise clinicians and consumers in case there are others who may be unknowingly affected by types of medications prescribed in Ayurvedic medicine,” said Jonathan Fielding, M.D., Director of Public Health and Health Officer for Los Angeles County.

Clinicians treating adult Asian Indian patients who present with these symptoms, even if mild, should inquire about the use of Ayurvedic medicines. If the patient is taking Ayurvedic medicine, a blood test screening for heavy metals is advised. Persons taking Ayurvedic medicine for health purposes are strongly advised to speak with their physician. For more information on lead poisoning prevention contact the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at 1(800) LA-4-LEAD.

Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of the nearly 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control and community and family health and comprises more than 3,800 employees with an annual budget exceeding $600 million.