



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SENIOR SERVICES  
DIVISION OF EPIDEMIOLOGY, ENVIRONMENTAL AND OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH  
PO BOX 369  
TRENTON, N.J. 08625-0369

JON S. CORZINE  
Governor

[www.nj.gov/health](http://www.nj.gov/health)

HEATHER HOWARD  
Commissioner

August 12, 2009

Dear Patient:

The New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services, in conjunction with the Ocean County Health Department (OCHD), continues to investigate a cluster of hepatitis B infections involving people who received care at Dr. Parvez Dara's offices at 214 Commons Way, Toms River, NJ, and/or 70 Lacey Road, Whiting, NJ. This letter is being mailed to you because insurance records indicate that you received care by Dr. Dara sometime since 2002. However, if you did not receive care from Dr. Dara at either of his two offices listed above, please disregard this letter.

Evidence gathered at this time suggests that since 2002, some clinic staff provided care in a manner that put patients at risk for infection caused by bloodborne viruses, including hepatitis B. Therefore, we are notifying all patients who received care at this hematology/oncology practice during January 1, 2002 through March 3, 2009, the last day patients underwent procedures that involved needles or syringes. The investigation to date suggests that the hepatitis B infections identified may be associated with the method by which medications were administered and procedures performed at the practice. There is no indication that the infections are associated with the medications themselves.

**We recommend that you get tested for certain viruses, including hepatitis B, that are spread through exposure to blood.** Testing involves getting a blood test. If you do test positive, there are treatments available that can help you maintain your health. It is recommended that you get tested soon after receiving this letter, because you can be infected with hepatitis B virus and have very mild or no symptoms. While there is a very small chance that you were exposed to hepatitis B, **it is important that you get tested for hepatitis B, even if you do not remember feeling sick.**

As an additional precaution, **we also recommend that you get tested for hepatitis C virus and HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) at the same time you are tested for hepatitis B.** Spread of HIV through intravenous (injection of medication into a vein) or intramuscular (injection of medication into a muscle) treatments is **not** common, **and we are not aware of any patients who became infected with HIV as a result of receiving treatments from this hematology/oncology practice.** Precautionary testing for HIV is recommended because it can also be spread through exposure to blood, in the same way as hepatitis. Knowing your HIV status is an important step in maintaining your health.

Because people can get hepatitis B and C infections or HIV infection in a number of different ways, **a positive test does not mean that you were infected during the care you received at the practice.** However, it is important that you get tested for these viruses, because there are treatments available if you do test positive.

**If you have ever been diagnosed with hepatitis B or C, or HIV, then you do not need to be retested for that particular virus.** However, we recommend that people who were vaccinated against hepatitis B still get tested for hepatitis B, in addition to hepatitis C and HIV.

**Please consult your health care provider to discuss testing arrangements. Your health care provider will be able to order the recommended tests.** Information for your health care provider may be found on-line at: [https://nj.gov/health/hepb\\_investigation.shtml](https://nj.gov/health/hepb_investigation.shtml). If you do not have a health care provider, you may obtain a referral from you insurance company or from a referral service. If you do not have health insurance, you may be able to access health services at a local health center. Use this link to find a health center near you: <http://www.njpca.org/FQHC/directory.aspx>

**You should use the laboratory where you normally receive services. If you are unsure what laboratory to use, contact your insurance provider for information.** Your insurance company will tell you which testing locations are covered by your plan and whether you are responsible for any costs associated with testing (for example, a co-pay or deductible). The attached list provided by the Association of Health plans may be useful when contacting your health insurer and determining in-network laboratory services.

We understand that you may have questions and/or concerns. To help answer them, we have included a fact sheet on hepatitis B with this letter. The Ocean County Health Department (OCHD) has set up an information line for you to call. You may call the OCHD at (732) 341-9700 ext. 7502. If your healthcare provider wishes further information, he or she may call the NJ Department of Health and Senior Services at (609) 588-7500, Monday through Friday, 8AM-5PM.

Sincerely,

Christina Tan, MD, MPH  
State Epidemiologist/Assistant Commissioner  
New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services

cc: Ella Boyd, VMD, Public Health Coordinator, OCHD