Memorandum

DATE: May 9, 2003

TO: Hospital Emergency Room Directors
    Emergency Room Physicians
    Urgent Care, Clinic, and Primary Care Physicians
    Laboratory Directors
    Emergency Medical Services Personnel

FROM: John J. Lanza, MD, PhD, MPH, FAAP, Director, Escambia County Health Department
      Elbert Sutton, MD, Director, Santa Rosa County Health Department

RE: RECOGNIZING BIOTERRORISM AGENTS

Following the anthrax outbreak in Palm Beach, Florida in October 2001, it became all too apparent the critical role that health care providers played in the identification of a “bioterrorist attack.”

We all remember the medical school adage, “When you hear hoofbeats, think horses, not zebras.” But now, the public health and medical community is challenged by the threat of bioterrorism incidents. It is vital that we learn how to recognize a zebra among the horses by increasing awareness of the clinical syndromes of each potential bioterrorism agent.

The Zebra Packet is designed to assist you in responding to a possible patient exposure. The Public Health Department is distributing the enclosed materials in order to provide guidelines for use by physicians and clinicians.

In the Zebra Packet you will find:
1. Public Health Department Disease Reporting Instructions
2. Detecting Bioterrorism — The Clinician’s Role
3. Charts of Bioterrorism Agents
4. Reference Material

If you have additional questions, please call the Public Health Disease Control and Prevention office (Epidemiology Department) during business hours:

   Escambia: (850) 595-6683  Santa Rosa: (850) 983-5200

After Hours Hotline (Nights/Weekends/Holidays) call: (850) 418-5566 (cell phone)

Source: Adapted with permission from the “Zebra Packet: Bioterrorism Information for Clinicians”—Santa Clara County Public Health Dept., Nov 2000.