

Case 263. 50-year-old female unit hospital technician died from complications of a Group A strep infection.

A 50-year-old female unit hospital technician died from complications of a Group A strep infection. Three weeks prior to her death, a patient with an infected wound was admitted to the ICU. Samples were collected from the patient and given to the hospital lab for analysis. The patient stayed at the hospital for 36 hours. During that time, the decedent provided comfort care during at least one shift. After the patient had transferred to another healthcare facility, the lab results determined that the patient had a Group A streptococcus infection. Approximately 3 weeks later, the decedent had flu-like symptoms, and was admitted to the hospital. Lab test results revealed that the decedent had the same strain of Group A strep as the admitted patient. Her death was due to cardiac arrest secondary to nonischemic cardiomyopathy due to or as a consequence of septic shock due to Group A Strep sepsis.

MIOSHA General Industry Safety and Health Division did not issue any citations to the decedent's employer at the conclusion of its investigation. Group A Strep is not considered a blood borne pathogen. The Michigan Department of Community Health indicated that standard precautions would be sufficient to protect an individual from developing an infection. The decedent's employer had developed and implemented a Standard Precautions policy, a hand hygiene policy and computer-based infection control training. Hospital employees acknowledged that training was provided on a yearly basis. In addition, the nursing supervisor conducted routine observations of standard procedures used in the hospital. It is recommended that under such circumstances the hospital assess the need for preventive antibiotics and closely monitor employees with chronic diseases like cancer, diabetes, kidney dialysis and those having open wounds or using medications such as steroids. These employees are more at risk of contacting the disease.