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TO: St. Clair County Healthcare
Providers, Hospital ICPs, Emergency
Departments, ED Physicians, Clinicians

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THALLIUM POISONING HEALTH ALERT

Michigan Poison Control and Michigan Department of Health and Human Services are investigating a second case of thallium poisoning where patients have been exposed to thallium and become severely ill. Michigan health care practitioners should be on alert for potential thallium exposures. Thallium is a heavy metal that was used as a rodenticide until 1972, used in semiconductor and optical industries, in the production of photoelectric cells and in a number of chemical processes. There have also been cases nationally related to contaminated heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamine.

Recommendations:

- Consider thallium poisoning in the differential diagnosis when caring for complex neurological cases:
 - Thallium causes a prodrome consisting of abdominal pain, vomiting, and either constipation or diarrhea.
 - Symptoms of thallium poisoning include vomiting, diarrhea, temporary hair loss, and effects on the nervous system, lungs, heart, liver, and kidneys, peripheral neuropathy progressing to motor neuropathy, encephalopathy and potentially death.
- In the case of a patient with a neurologic syndrome of unclear etiology and aspects of the presentation consistent with what is mentioned above, consider collecting a spot urine thallium for screening and contact the Michigan Poison Control Center (1-800-222-1222) 24 hours/day.
- Call SCCHD with questions or to report suspect/actual cases (810) 987-5300.