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New Hampshire
An Online Edition of *The Keene Sentinel*

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New Hampshire authorities say that only one student at Monadnock was infected with TB

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Published:
Tuesday, March 24, 2009 12:42 PM EDT

SWANZEY CENTER — Officials with the Department of Health and Human Services have confirmed there is only one active case of tuberculosis in the Monadnock Regional School District, despite rumors to the contrary circulating among concerned parents.

Dr. Jose T. Montero, director of public health for the health department, would not comment on whether the infected student has siblings, or if they had been tested.

"We started this investigation with the family two weeks ago; we know we have no other active cases," Montero said this morning. "I will not disclose any specifics, but I will tell you we do not have any other cases of (active) tuberculosis."

About 30 other students at Monadnock Regional High School were tested for the disease Monday. The results of those tests should be available by the end of the week, and a second round of tests will be administered in 10 weeks.

The tests should determine if any students have a latent tuberculosis infection. Instead of causing symptoms, in most people the tuberculosis bacteria is attacked by the body's immune system, and stops growing.

While the department waits for the results, the students are still allowed to attend school, because tuberculosis cannot be spread by someone with a latent infection.

Someone infected with latent tuberculosis is still at risk for developing the disease in the future, and would likely be treated with antibiotics to eradicate the bacteria.

There is no need to be concerned for students in other schools, Montero said.

Still, some parents are questioning the communication from the department and the district.

"It's pretty scary for all of us," said Susan Beal, a mother with two students at Troy Elementary School, who said her kids came home asking about tuberculosis, but the district did not provide any information for parents.

The district alerted families of students at the high school with a letter sent home on Friday, and a phone call to the families of all students in the district on Saturday.

Of the 1,920 calls made, 1,088 were received. The rest were either busy on multiple attempts or not picked up by a person or answering machine, according to Monadnock's director of technology, Christopher W. P. Boyle.

Decisions about which parents to notify were made by the health department, not the district, said high school Principal Brian S. Pickering.

"We asked specifically what to do ... and did exactly what they told us to do," Pickering said. "We're following their lead."

Montero said the department did not notify parents at other schools because there are no cases of active tuberculosis there.

"There is no reason to do that," he said. "There is no reason to be doing anything else in other schools."

David Dahl, principal of Troy Elementary, confirmed no active cases of tuberculosis are in his school.

"I think there are some people with a good imagination," he said. "That's typical when you have something like this happen."

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