

**5/14/02**

The following message was received this morning from the Association of the State:

**Subject:** ASTHO ER Media Alert and Smallpox Talking Points

**Importance:** High

As you are aware, the final episode of 'ER' this Thursday night will feature a story line about two possible cases of smallpox in Chicago. ASTHO, APHL, ASTDN, CSTE, and the NASEMSD have developed the attached media advisory that will be sent to all major media markets today. In addition, the individuals identified as spoke persons from these organizations have developed the attached talking points that we hope will be useful to you in responding to – or initiating – any press contacts about the episode in your state. It is our understanding that the final diagnosis of the presenting illness in these two young people will remain unknown until the first episode of 'ER's' next season in the fall.

ASTHO has a risk communication/media training seminar using smallpox as an example on our web site. It was a 2-hour video that you can watch on the web, and there is also a training manual. It is very good training on how to handle media questions. Feel free to check it out at [www.astho.org](http://www.astho.org) under April 11 web cast on responding to Bioterrorism.

The ACIP and NVAC are working to develop recommendations on the use of smallpox vaccine both pre-event and, should an event actually occur, post-exposure. These recommendations are expected in June. ASTHO, through its Infectious Disease Policy Committee, and many of the ASTHO Affiliates, have been active participants in providing information for the working group's deliberations. At a meeting of the advisory committee's working group last week, state public health issues were discussed by Drs. Ed Thompson of Mississippi; Gus Birkhead of New York; Natalie Smith of California; and Gianfranco Pezzino of Kansas.

As soon as new national vaccine usage recommendations are available, we will share them with you.

It is also our understanding that NACCHO will be issuing a similar media alert and providing talking points directly to its members. Once we receive a copy of their media materials, we will share them with you as well. We hope this information is useful to you and your staff.