

Friday, August 11, 1978

Polio quarantine total over 80 in Oxford

More than 80 Oxford residents and four Norfolk residents who may have come in contact with carriers of polio virus have been quarantined.

The medical officer of health for Oxford, Dr. William Butt, said Thursday he expects the number of persons quarantined to increase until the outbreak of polio is halted. "The quarantine list grows longer by the minute. Those under quarantine have spread beyond members of the congregation of the Netherlands Reformed Church."

Most of the quarantined Norfolk residents are relatives of confirmed polio victims.

A sister of two Norwich brothers with paralytic polio has been admitted to Victoria Hospital in London with the third confirmed case of the disease in Oxford County.

The woman, Margaret Boesterd, 23, of R1 Brownsville, was taken to hospital Wednesday by ambulance after complaining of leg pains. A county health official later confirmed that the woman had contracted polio.

She joins her brothers, Rick Van Vliet, 24, and Jim, 14, who were sent to hospital late last month.

A third brother, 21-year-old Cornelius Van Vliet, is under quarantine in his Woodstock home, but is not suffering from the disease, Dr. Butt said. None of the family had been immunized against the disease.

Although the number of persons under quarantine in southwestern Ontario and Alberta has increased, the number of confirmed polio victims in Canada remained six Thursday.

Dennis Timbrell, the provincial minister of health, had announced that four cases of the disease had been confirmed in Oxford County and two persons were suspected of having polio.

However, ministry officials in Toronto were not able to explain the discrepancy between their total of four confirmed cases in Oxford and the three supplied by the Oxford medical officer of health.

Dr. Butt said the two suspected cases, which have been clinically diagnosed as having polio but not confirmed by laboratory tests, are a 15-year-old boy from the Dutch community near Norwich and a young Woodstock woman. The woman is the first case outside the Dutch community.

Both suspected victims of the disease are in hospital in London.

The ministry of health also announced that one of a group of migrant Dutch farm workers in Haldimand-Norfolk Region is ill and under examination in hospital.

A ministry spokesman in Toronto said the man was showing symptoms that could indicate polio. Although the man has been immunized, he had not received booster shots.

The largest turnout for polio immunization and booster shots has been in Oxford County and the adjacent Haldimand-Norfolk Region.

The ministry of health ordered a wider quarantine of persons who may have come in contact with the polio virus after additional laboratory tests revealed that a polio contact who had earlier received a clean bill of health actually had the virus in his system.

Fifteen contacts who previously had received positive test results already were in quarantine. Persons who have the virus in their systems but show no polio symptoms may remain healthy but pass the disease to others.

Those under quarantine in southwestern Ontario will be among the first persons to suffer financially from a change made in 1975 to the Ontario Public

Health Act. In that year the legislature revoked a subsection of the act which had been used to provide compensation to persons who lose money while being confined to their residences.

A ministry spokesman in Toronto said lawyers have examined the change and are certain the ministry will not need to provide money for time away from work. The spokesman added that the ministry has no intention of providing compensation.

Dr. Butt said the spread of disease beyond members of the Netherlands Reformed Congregation, who refuse to be immunized, could make the disease harder to track down and control.

A. M. Denboer, minister of the Netherlands Reformed Congregation in Norwich, said Thursday the church has no fixed policy about immunization, but many members are opposed as a matter of personal belief.

He accused the media of misrepresenting the views of orthodox reformed churches and said much of the publicity resulting from the polio outbreak in Oxford County has arisen because there is an identifiable group on which to pin the blame.

In a prepared statement he said: "The objection that many of these people have to

Continued on Page 2 -

Brant health unit gets new supply of vaccine

The Brant County District Health Unit which ran out of polio vaccine on Wednesday during its regular weekly clinic received 6,000 to 7,000 units sometime Thursday.

An immunization clinic began at 8:40 a.m. today and was expected to continue until 8 p.m.

Dr. William Page, Brant County's medical officer of health, said he has now enough vaccine to supply family doctors. Earlier this week, doctors had their supplies depleted and could not get more from the health unit.

Dr. Page said about 300 persons per hour were being vaccinated and most had only about a 15-minute wait.

Shortly after 9 a.m. about 200 people were waiting outside and inside the health unit building on Terrace Hill Street.

About 2,000 people have already been vaccinated at clinics on Tuesday and Wednesday.

"I am hoping that this big blitz will finish it off," Dr. Page said today.

In spite of the fact that the ministry of health has called for a wider quarantine, Dr. Page said no Brant County residents have been quarantined although some are under surveillance for symptoms.

He said that any person in the county who develops a fever is being automatically tested for the polio virus.