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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT ANTHRAX PREVENTION AND TREATMENT

October 10, 2001

Q: Is there an approved treatment for anthrax?

A: Yes. Three types of antibiotics are approved for anthrax: ciprofloxacin, tetracyclines (including doxycycline), and penicillins. For people who have been exposed to anthrax but do not have symptoms, 60 days of one of these antibiotics is given to reduce the risk or progression of disease due to inhaled anthrax.

Q: Does the government have a plan in place to make Cipro available if there were mass exposure to anthrax?

A: Yes. Under emergency plans, the Federal government would ship appropriate antibiotics from its stockpile to wherever they are needed.

Q: Should individual consumers ask their physicians to write a prescription for Cipro, so they have it on hand in case it's needed?

A: No. Any needed antibiotics from the current stockpile will be made available if they are needed. In the meantime, Cipro should not be prescribed unless there is a clearly indicated need, so that the drug will be available as the need arises for the standard infections for which it is used.

Q: What is FDA telling physicians and other health professionals about prescriptions for Cipro?

A: Although FDA does not regulate the practice of medicine, the agency is strongly recommending that physicians not prescribe Cipro for individual patients to have on hand for possible use against inhaled anthrax. In addition to the potential influence on supply of the drug, indiscriminate prescribing and widespread use of Cipro could hasten the development of drug-resistant organisms.

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General information on anthrax is available on the CDC Web site at:
www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/anthrax_g.htm.

Note: All HHS press releases, fact sheets and other press materials are available at www.hhs.gov/news.

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