



Briefing Note: Cases of pneumonia due to unknown cause Tucumán Argentina

1 September 2022

Situation Summary

On 30 August 2022, the Ministry of Health of Argentina informed to the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) of the notification by the Ministry of Public Health of Tucumán Province, on the detection of a cluster of 6 cases of bilateral pneumonia in six patients without etiological identification so far¹.

The reported cases are five health workers and a patient who is hospitalized in the intensive care service of a private clinic in the city of San Miguel de Tucumán. Onset of symptom was between 18-22 August, presenting with fever, myalgia, abdominal pain, and dyspnea. The six cases presented with bilateral pneumonia; two of them died, three are hospitalized, and one is at home isolation in stable condition. All cases are related to the same healthcare center.

The samples have been tested by the local public health laboratory for respiratory viruses, and other viral, bacterial and fungal agents, all tested negative. The samples have been sent to the National Administration of Laboratories and Health Institutes (ANLIS per its acronym in Spanish) "Dr. Carlos Malbrán", for additional testing²; including toxicological analyses, which are ongoing.

On 1 September 2022, the Ministry of Public Health of Tucumán³ reported 3 additional patients, all health care workers, with onset of symptom between 20 and 23 August, presenting similar symptoms compared to the 6 cases reported previously.

To date, a total of 9 cases related to this cluster have been identified, including 3 deaths.

Preliminary investigation indicates that the fatal cases had comorbidities. Contacts of the cases are under follow-up and to date any of them developed symptoms.

¹ Ministry of Public Health of the Government of Tucumán Official Communication. The Ministry of Public Health reported that an outbreak of bilateral pneumonia has been detected in six patients, without having been able to determine its origin and etiology. Available at: <https://msptucuman.gov.ar/comunicado-oficial-18/>

² Argentina Ministry of Health press release, "ANLIS-MALBRÁN analyzes samples from cases of pneumonia of unknown cause in Tucumán". Available at: <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/noticias/anlis-malbran-analiza-las-muestras-de-los-casos-de-neumonia-de-causa-desconocida-en-tucuman>

³ Ministry of Public Health of the Government of Tucumán Official Communication. The Ministry of Public Health reported on the health situation of the bilateral pneumonia outbreak. Available at: <https://msptucuman.gov.ar/el-ministerio-de-salud-informo-sobre-la-situacion-sanitaria-del-brote-de-neumonia-bilateral/>

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Public health response

The Argentina Ministry of Health and provincial health authorities are working together to investigate the outbreak, as well as to conduct contact tracing and specific control actions in the healthcare center related to the outbreak.

PAHO/WHO is monitoring this event along with the Argentina health authorities.