



Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention (CDC)
Atlanta GA 30333

NOV 10 2003

Dear Colleague:

We are at a crossroads in public health. In 1980, we eradicated smallpox as a naturally occurring disease. Now, this contagious, deadly disease may be brought back as a biological weapon. The most effective tool we have against the disease is the smallpox vaccine, which carries its own risks.

President Bush has initiated a national preparedness program to protect our citizens against smallpox as a biological weapon. Communities have been asked to form smallpox preparedness teams that are ready for a potential smallpox attack on our country. Some of you must now decide whether to participate in this effort and receive the vaccination so that you might protect others. You must weigh your decision carefully.


As you consider participating on a smallpox preparedness team, and before making any decision, please read the materials in the enclosed Smallpox Pre-Vaccination Information Packet. The packet includes the smallpox Vaccination Information Statement (VIS) and a screening worksheet. Please also view the brief video entitled "Decision Point for the Smallpox Vaccine Candidate." These materials are available on the CDC website at www.cdc.gov/smallpox, along with additional information about smallpox and smallpox vaccination.

If you have any questions, please consult your healthcare provider prior to vaccination. Your safety is our highest priority.

We recognize the decision about whether or not to participate in a smallpox preparedness team is difficult. Therefore, we urge you to read, understand, and weigh all the information concerning your personal risks against your ability to help protect those in your community against a potential attack.

On behalf of all of us in public health, we truly thank you for taking the time to make this important decision.

Sincerely,


Julie Louise Gerberding, M.D., M.P.H.
Director

Enclosure