BIOTERORISM

Essay submitted in partial fulfillment for the Master Degree in Clinical Pathology

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

US United States
B. anthracis Bacillus anthracis

CDC Centre for disease control and

prevention

HEPA High efficiency particulate air filters

LRN laboratory response network DFA Direct fluorescent antibody

ELISA Enzyme linked Immunosorbent assay

PCR Polymerase chain reaction

MMWR Morbidity mortality weekly report
ACEI angiotensin converting enzyme

inhibitor

EM Electron microscopy
LM Light microscopy
F. tularensis Francisella tularensis
VHF Viral hemorrhagic fever

EBO Ebola virus

EHF Ebola hemorrhagic fever AHF Argentine hemorrhagic fever

E. coli Escherichia coli

HUS Hemolytic uremic syndrome

Stx Shiga like toxin

IHA Indirect hemagglutinationPFGE Pulsed-field gel electrophoresisIFA Indirect immunofluorescnceER Endoplasmic reticulum

SEB Staphylococcal enterotoxin B
ESR Erythrocyte sedimentation rate
VEE Venezuelan equine encephalitis
EEE eastern equine encephalitis
WEE western equine encephalitis
MRI Magnetic resonance imaging

SEDIGFA Silver Enhanced Dot Immunogold

Filtration Assay

PPE NIOSH Safety and Health ETO SCBA USAMRID Institute of Infectious Diseases Personal protective equipment National Institute Of Occupational

Ethylene oxide Self-contained breathing apparatus US Army Medical Research

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- Vi	ral hemorrhagic fevers
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- 1	Epsilon toxin of Clostridium perfringens
- E	Escherichia coli serotype 0157:H7
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Introduction

As we enter the 21st century, the threats of biological warfare and bioterrorism appear to be more than before. After the September 11, 2001 attacks on the world trade center and distribution of anthrax spores via the USA postal service, every country in the world is now living under the shadow of an unknown yet already enemy biological weapons. Every individual has suddenly become very vulnerable to this new weapon, which can strike any body at any time without any warning (*Pal and Chattopadhyay*, 2002).

Historical evidence suggests that biological weapons have been used for many centuries, despite the international agreements to ban such weapons, namely the 1925 Geneva Protocol and the 1975 biological and toxin weapons convention, there is no effective international mechanism for challenging either the development or the use of biological weapons (*Spencer and Lightfoot, 2001*).

The use of microorganisms as agents of biological warfare is considered inevitable for several reasons including ease of production and dispersion, ability to cause high rates of morbidity and mortality and difficulty in diagnosis (*Broussard*, 2001). Biological weaponeers now have the frightening ability to alter the genetic makeup of pathogens rendering them resistant not only to available antibiotic therapy, but also to the currently effective vaccines and in dark corners of some fringe groups, bioweaponeers are searching for the capability of designing pathogens that target specific races (*Wenzel*, 2002).

Biological agents that have been identified as posing the great threat are Variola major (smallpox), Bacillus anthracis (anthrax), Yersinia pestis (Plague), Clostridium botulinum toxin (Botulism), Francisella tularensis (Tularemia), Ebola hemorrhagic fever and Marburg hemorrhagic fever and others (*Broussard*, 2001).

Knowledge of the principle clinical presentation of victims of biological warfare or bioterrorism is essential to all physicians. This knowledge may contribute to the early recognition of a cluster of patients, an epidemic, an unusual disease, quick referral to emergency department leading to early diagnosis, and rapid notification of the ministry of health. All these and the institution of appropriate measures will ultimately contribute to the survival of individual patients and at risk populations (Yinnon et al., 2002).

Aim of the study:

The aim of this study is to spot a light on different microorganisms used as weapons in bioterrorism.

Bioterrorism

General Features:

Bioterrorism is defined as "the international use of micro-organisms or toxins derived from living organisms to produce death or disease in humans, animals or plants".

From the public and private health perspective, bioterrorism can be defined as the deliberate release of pathogens or their toxins into a civilian population with the intent to cause illness or death. In addition to humans, agricultural animals and plants must also be considered as potential targets of bioterrorism (*Snyder and Weissfeld*, 2003).

Bioterrorism utilizes specific terms, many of which are used interchangeably. As defined above, bioterrorism (biological-warfare) refers to indiscriminate targeting of the masses (e.g. battlefield or civilian population), whereas the term biocrime or biothreat is used when a bioterrorist which may be one individual who acts alone or a state or non state non-sponsored group, targets a specific group or individual. The bioterrorism associated cases of anthrax that occurred in the United States (U.S.) in October and November 2001 represent a biocrime because the primary targets were U.S. politicians and the media rather than the U.S. civilian population. Thus a biocrime is a criminal act involving the use of biological agents as weapons, and a biothreat is characterized as a suspected but unconfirmed release of a biological agent(s) i.e., microbial pathogens and/or toxins which have been previously considered or used in biological warfare and recent terrorist events (Gilchrist et al., 2000).