PRESS INFORMATION

"8th Meeting of the International Scientific Working Group on TBE (TBE: Tick Borne Encephalitis)"
"TBE a European Health Challenge"
Hotel Bayerischer Hof, Munich
Friday, March 17th 2006

Prevention of TBE for travellers

Dr. Pamela Rendi - Wagner

Tick-born encephalitis (TBE) is endemic in several countries of Europe and Asia. Within the last years, a significantly increasing trend of Central and Eastern European travel destinations could be observed. However, Europeans traveling within their own continent do not feel like travelers exposed to possibly travel-associated infections since problem of awareness among tourists as well as doctors is rather scanty. However, with increased intercontinental travel to areas of high endemicity tourists run incremental risk of acquiring TBE during their holiday. On the basis of excellent epidemiological data available in Austria, a considerable risk of TBE disease can be estimated for an unvaccinated tourist staying for 4 weeks in a highly endemic touristy province of Austria. Active immunization is the most effective tool of TBE prevention, showing cross-protection against various TBE subtypes. Though not formally evaluated, it seems reasonable to recommend TBE vaccination to travelers going to high-risk TBE regions. Moreover, growing awareness outside endemic areas may provide the basis for monitoring of TBE infections throughout Europe enabling us to calculate a more accurate risk of TBE infection in unprotected travelers to high risk areas.