



Monkeypox: A Cautionary Tale for Preserving Global Herd Immunity

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INTRODUCTION

Monkeypox, a rare viral disease, has emerged as a cautionary tale highlighting the importance of maintaining global herd immunity to prevent the reemergence of infectious diseases. Similar to its cousin smallpox, Monkeypox serves as a reminder of the delicate balance between human health, zoonotic infections, and the need for robust vaccination programs to safeguard populations worldwide. Monkeypox is caused by the Monkeypox virus, a member of the Orthopoxvirus family. It was first identified in monkeys in the Democratic Republic of Congo in the 1950s. While humans are not the natural hosts for this virus, they can become infected through direct contact with infected animals or human-to-human transmission. Monkeypox infection leads to a range of symptoms, including fever, rash, and pustules, resembling smallpox. Although Monkeypox is generally less severe than smallpox, it still poses risks, especially to vulnerable populations. Monkeypox is a zoonotic disease, meaning it originates in animals and can be transmitted to humans. Infections often occur in areas where humans and animals come into close contact, particularly in regions with frequent interaction between humans and wildlife. Changes in land use, deforestation, and encroachment into natural habitats can increase the likelihood of spillover events, where viruses jump from animals to humans. Herd immunity, also known as community immunity, occurs when a significant portion of a population becomes immune to a disease, either through vaccination or previous infections. This makes it difficult for the disease to spread within the community, protecting even those who are not immune. Herd immunity is particularly important for preventing outbreaks and protecting individuals who cannot be vaccinated due to medical reasons.

DESCRIPTION

Monkeypox serves as a stark reminder of the value of vaccination in preventing disease. Smallpox vaccination efforts inadvertently provided some level of immunity against Monkeypox, contributing to its containment. However, with smallpox erad-

ication, routine smallpox vaccination ceased, allowing Monkeypox to resurface in areas where the population lacked immunity to the virus. This resurgence highlights the importance of continued vaccination efforts even after a disease has been eradicated or is no longer prevalent. The resurgence of Monkeypox underscores the need for robust global vaccination programs to maintain herd immunity against diseases that may re-emerge. Immunization campaigns must be sustained to ensure that susceptible populations remain protected. Additionally, cross-species transmission and zoonotic infections demand a more holistic approach that considers both human and animal health. Preserving global herd immunity involves proactive measures such as increasing vaccine coverage, strengthening surveillance systems, and enhancing public health infrastructure. Preventing diseases like Monkeypox requires collaboration between human health professionals, veterinarians, ecologists, and policymakers. Addressing the complex factors that contribute to zoonotic infections requires a multidisciplinary and collaborative effort. The reemergence of Monkeypox serves as a stark lesson from history. It illustrates the consequences of waning immunity, inadequate vaccination efforts, and the potential for diseases to resurge when we let our guard down. By preserving global herd immunity through sustained vaccination efforts and a One Health approach, we can mitigate the risks of reemerging infectious diseases and protect the health and well-being of communities worldwide.

CONCLUSION

The reemergence of Monkeypox serves as a stark reminder of the critical role of herd immunity in preventing infectious disease outbreaks. Preserving global herd immunity requires ongoing vaccination efforts, collaborative approaches, and a commitment to maintaining the delicate balance between human, animal, and environmental health. As we navigate the complexities of the modern world, the lessons learned from the history of Monkeypox provide a clear warning to remain vigilant in our efforts to protect global health.

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