Pertussis Case Study

In recent years vaccine-preventable diseases have caused a number of outbreaks in the United States. Such was the case in an Amish community in Kent County in southern Delaware. Between September 2004 and February 2005, a total of 345 cases of pertussis (also known as

whooping cough) were identified in this close-knit community of 1,711 people. Nurses from the

Delaware Department of Public Health detected the first cases among patients that were being seen in the Southern Health Services clinic that serves the area. In order to control the spread of the disease, special pertussis clinics were set up in the Amish schools within the community. The clinics provided a means to educate community members about prevention, control, and treatment measures. In addition, local doctors and health care providers were notified and provided with diagnostic kits. To determine the full extent of the outbreak, surveillance strategies were developed. These included self-administered questionnaires and household interviews.

* *What causes pertussis and how is it diagnosed?*
* *What measures can be taken to prevent outbreaks such as this one?*