Maine Governor LePage Blames Immigrants for Hepatitis

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The Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention recently warned restaurant patrons across the state that they may have been exposed to the hepatitis A virus (HAV) by an HAV-positive food service worker, the Portland Press Herald reports.

When asked at a campaign stop about the situation, Governor Paul LePage (R-Maine) said: “I have been trying to get the president to pay attention to the illegals in our country because there’s been a spike in hepatitis C, tuberculosis and HIV, but it’s going on deaf ears.”

LePage didn’t explain what connection, if any, immigrants had to the unknown restaurant, which potentially exposed patrons to hep A between September 29 and October 11.

Rates of hepatitis A and B and tuberculosis have been consistently falling in the United States, despite recent upticks in immigration. Hepatitis C rates have been increasing lately, but the rise has been mostly concentrated among young, suburban white people who use injection drugs. HIV rates in Maine are roughly a third of the national average.

The state is now encouraging health care providers to keep watch for hep A symptoms in local patients, including jaundice, clay-colored stool, dark urine, abdominal discomfort and fever. So far, no infections have been reported.

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