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Case Definitions  
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Rheumatic Fever  
1997 Case Definition  
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1997 Case Definition  
NOTE:  
A surveillance case definition is a set of uniform criteria used to define a disease for public health surveillance. Surveillance case definitions enable public health officials to classify and count cases consistently across reporting jurisdictions. Surveillance case definitions are not intended to be used by healthcare providers for making a clinical diagnosis or determining how to meet an individual patient’s health needs.  
Clinical Description  
An inflammatory illness that occurs as a delayed sequela of group A streptococcal infection  
Major criteria  
: carditis, polyarthritis, chorea, subcutaneous nodules, and erythema marginatum  
Minor criteria  
: a) previous rheumatic fever or rheumatic heart disease; b) arthralgia; c) fever; d) elevated erythrocyte sedimentation rate, positive C-reactive protein, or leukocytosis; and e) prolonged PR interval on an electrocardiogram  
Laboratory Criteria For Diagnosis  
No specific laboratory test exists for the diagnosis of rheumatic fever  
Case Classification  
Confirmed  
An illness characterized by a) two major criteria or one major and two minor criteria (as described in Clinical Description) and b) supporting evidence of preceding group A streptococcal infection.  
1  
Comments  
Supporting evidence to confirm streptococcal infection includes increased antistreptolysin-O or other streptococcal antibodies, throat culture positive for group A streptococcus, or recent scarlet fever. The absence of supporting evidence of preceding streptococcal infection should make the diagnosis doubtful, except in Sydenham chorea or low-grade carditis when rheumatic fever is first discovered after a long latent period from the antecedent infection.  
The 1997 case definition appearing on this page was previously published in the 1990  
MMWR  
Recommendations and Reports titled  
Case Definitions for Public Health Surveillance  
.  
2  
Thus, the 1990 and 1997 versions of the case definition are identical.  
References  
American Heart Association. Jones criteria (revised) for guidance in the diagnosis of rheumatic fever. Circulation 1984;69:204A-8A.  
CDC. (1990). Case Definitions for Public Health Surveillance.  
MMWR  
, 39(RR-13), 1-43.  
https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/00025629.htm  
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NNDSS receives and shares case data from state, local, and territorial health departments to help public health monitor, control, and prevent serious diseases.  
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