

Surfer ^{2/6/83} *Sentinel* contracts cholera

DAVENPORT — A 19-year-old surfer has contracted cholera after being in the water off Davenport Landing last month.

Doctors originally diagnosed the case as diabetes, but it took a doctor who had done his internship in India to identify the disease as cholera.

The victim, Gregg Lyons of Bonny Doon, has returned home after the bout with the disease.

The beaches in the Davenport area remain open today. Public health officials indicated there was no reason to close the beach for swimming because they felt it was an isolated case.

Lyons had surfed in the water off Davenport Landing on Jan. 14, and became ill the next morning. Cholera was not diagnosed originally, but was finally suspected by Dr. Surinder Kumar, a kidney specialist called in to see Lyons after his kidneys shut down the day after the teen-ager was admitted to Dominican Hospital.

Kumar said he suspected the disease as soon as he examined the patient. "I had a chance to see cholera patients in 1968 when I was doing my internship in India," he said. The fact that Lyons was losing a tremendous amount of fluid "about 18 to 29 pounds through his stools," prompted Kumar to order a culture.

"I haven't seen cholera in this country," he added. "It was a little surprising for everybody."

Kumar said that Lyons was lucky his kidneys were not permanently damaged.

Lyons had not traveled outside the country.

The bacteria has been preliminary identified as a less dangerous variety than that which has caused epidemics in Asia. But physicians in this country have had so little experience with the disease, as well as the general public in developing immunities, that it remains unknown at this time, officials say, what the dangers are to the general public.

Samples of the water in the Davenport Landing area were found to have

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cholera bacteria. Further samples have been sent to the state laboratory in Berkeley and a feces sample from the victim has been sent to the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta.

Ray Talley of the county Environmental Health Department, said Saturday that water samples have been taken from San Vicente Creek and the ocean waters. Officials are also planning to take shellfish samples this week.

"It isn't like the typical sewer break," he commented.

Dr. Kumar said it's not 100 percent certain that Lyons contracted the disease in the ocean. He said the disease is contracted by ingesting the bacteria, and added that Lyons could not have become infected just by swimming in the water.

Dr. Miguel Stroe, assistant county health officer in charge of communicable diseases, said there have been sporadic cases in other parts of the country but that it is the first time the organism has been found in marine waters.