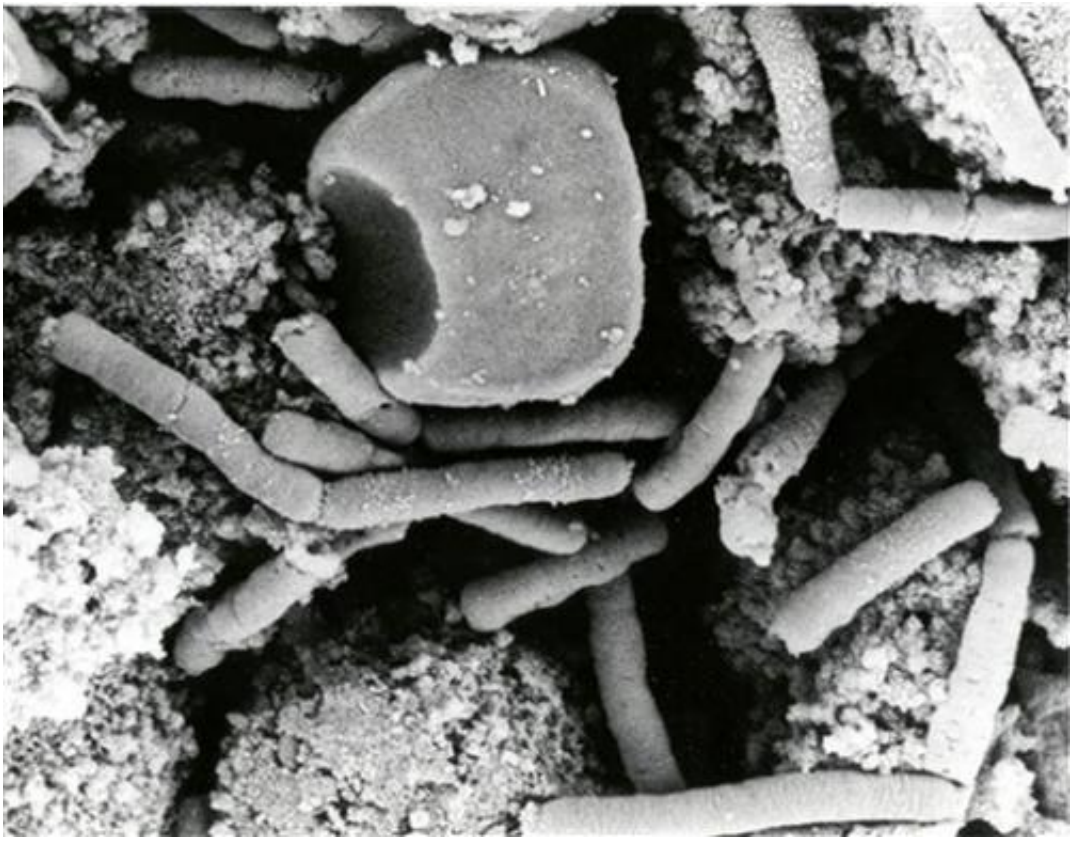
Dozens of US workers taking anti-anthrax drugs

June 20 2014, by Marilynn Marchione



This undated file electronmicrograph from the official U.S. Department of Defense anthrax information Web Site shows Bacillus anthracis vegetative cells in a monkey spleen. Anthrax is an infectious disease caused by the spore-forming bacteria Bacillus anthracis. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Thursday, June 19, 2014, that some of its staff in Atlanta may have been accidentally exposed to dangerous anthrax bacteria because of a safety problem at some of its labs. (AP Photo/Anthrax Vaccine Immunization Program, File)

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says at least 52 workers are taking antibiotics as a precaution because of a lab safety problem that may have accidentally exposed them to anthrax.

So far, the CDC's occupational health clinic has seen 54 out of 86 potentially exposed employees. Only two have refused antibiotic treatment, which can cut the chances of infection after exposure to the germ. The CDC says 27 of them also began receiving an anthrax vaccine .

The safety lapse occurred when a high-level biosecurity lab failed to completely inactivate anthrax samples sent to less secure labs for further research. The problem was discovered last Friday, and the CDC revealed it on Thursday.

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