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## Anthrax as a Biological Weapon: Medical and Public Health Management

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In a consensus statement published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, the Working Group on Civilian Biodefense asserts that the medical community requires training about anthrax in order to respond effectively in the event of a terrorist attack. The current US anthrax vaccine, which is made by Michigan's Bioport Corporation, is derived from the cell-free filtrate of a nonencapsulated attenuated strain of

*Bacillus anthracis* and requires six shots. The authors note that approximately 590,000 doses of the vaccine have been administered to US military personnel as of March 1, 1999, with no serious adverse effects. However, stocks and production of the vaccine are limited, and it could be several years until adequate quantities of vaccine are available for civilians. The working group notes, though, that "even if vaccine were available, populationwide vaccination would not be recommended at this time, given the costs and logistics of a

large-scale vaccination program and the unlikely occurrence of a bioterrorist attack in any given community." Additional knowledge is also needed with regard to possible maximum incubation times after exposure to spore-containing aerosols and to the best postexposure drug treatments.

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