



Protecting, maintaining, and improving the health of all Minnesotans

April 4, 2006

Name
Facility
Street address
Address 2
City, State Zip

RE: Infection Control and Clinical Issues for Potential Avian and Pandemic Influenza

Dear _____:

We are writing to request your support and implementation of the recommendations that the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) is making to enhance the protection of healthcare workers in a pandemic influenza event. Healthcare workers will be in the front line during a pandemic. Keeping them on the job by preventing them from becoming ill is an essential component of Minnesota's Pandemic Influenza Plan.

At this time, MDH is recommending that full barrier precautions (airborne and contact precautions, plus eye protection), in addition to standard precautions, be used for all known and suspect cases of H5N1. Our recommendation is based upon the likelihood that a vaccine will not be available and that antivirals will be in limited supply at best, especially during the first few months of a pandemic.

In accordance with this recommendation, we are advising all Minnesota Health Care Facilities *to begin stockpiling of personal protective equipment, particularly N-95 respirators and powered air purifying respirators (PAPRs)*. Stockpiling is necessary because this equipment is already in short supply and will almost certainly not be available once a pandemic starts. This would also be an appropriate time to review your healthcare facility's Infection Control Plan and update as necessary.

We are enclosing a copy of the letter from MDH to the directors of infection control and occupational or employee health at Minnesota Health Care Facilities. Conference calls to discuss these issues with them have been scheduled on April 7, April 10 and April 11. MDH will be keeping them informed on a regular basis of the latest research findings on cleaning and reusing N95 masks. We are hopeful that there will be breakthrough in these areas and are in regular discussions with the manufacturers to stay informed of their progress.

Thank you for all you are doing to prepare for potential avian and pandemic influenza. If you or your staff has specific concerns, you may call Dr. Ruth Lynfield at 651.201.5422.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dianne Mandernach". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dianne M. Mandernach
Commissioner
P.O. Box 64975
St. Paul, MN 55164-0975

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Harry F. Hull". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Harry F. Hull, M.D.
State Epidemiologist
P.O. Box 64975
St. Paul, MN 55164-0975