



Pandemic Influenza

Get Informed...Be Prepared

A newsletter for Minnesota organizations preparing for a possible influenza pandemic.

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Pandemic Influenza Newsletter marks one year anniversary

In October of 2006, MDH launched a new electronic communication tool dedicated to providing timely and useful information to Minnesota organizations planning and preparing for the impacts of a possible influenza pandemic.

This month we celebrate the one year anniversary of this newsletter and thought we should look back at its impact over the year.

Currently, there are approximately 1400 subscribers who receive notice of the newsletter each month. This number does not account for the secondary forwarding that we anecdotally know goes on within organizations.

As for our audience, it comprises many sectors including business, communicators, schools, faith-based organizations, health systems, tribal entities, public health, social service, community-based and non-profit organizations, and all levels of government. Subscribers come from many other states and even from other countries.

Your continued support for this newsletter is greatly appreciated.
Thank you!

Institute of Medicine (IOM) calls for new research on PPE for pandemic

During an influenza pandemic, healthcare workers will be on the front lines delivering care to patients and preventing further spread of the disease. Protecting the more than 13 million healthcare workers in the United States from illness or from infecting their families or the patients in their care is critical to limiting morbidity and mortality and preventing progression of a pandemic.

As the nation prepares for pandemic influenza, multiple avenues for protecting the health of the public are being carefully considered, ranging from rapid development of appropriate vaccines to quarantine plans should the need arise for their implementation. One vital aspect of pandemic influenza planning is the use of personal protective equipment (PPE)—the respirators, gowns, gloves, face shields, eye protection, and other equipment that will be used by healthcare workers and others in their day-to-day patient care responsibilities.

In 2006, the National Personal Protective Technology Laboratory (NPPTL) at the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) asked the Institute of Medicine (IOM) to conduct a study on the personal protective equipment needed by healthcare workers in the event of an influenza pandemic. The IOM committee has determined that there is an urgent need to address the lack of preparedness regarding effective PPE for use in an influenza pandemic. Three critical areas were identified that require expeditious research and policy action:

- Understand influenza transmission
- Commit to worker safety and appropriate use of PPE
- Innovate and strengthen PPE design, testing, and certification

View the entire IOM report at:
http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=11980#toc

Report finds pandemic plans need greater focus on children

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and Trust for America's Health (TFAH) recently issued a new report, *Pandemic Influenza: Warning, Children At-Risk*, which finds that children and teens between the ages of 0-19 account for nearly 46 percent of all H5N1 avian flu deaths. The report also identifies gaps in U.S. preparedness for treating and caring for children during a possible pandemic influenza outbreak.

Four key areas of concern raised in the report include: child-appropriate doses of vaccine and medications; management and treatment of children who become ill; including children in strategies to slow the spread of influenza in communities; and caring for and supervising the health of children if schools and childcare facilities are closed for extended periods of time.

"Children are not simply small adults, especially when it comes to medical concerns. The fact that H5N1 has been disproportionately impacting children and adolescents should give us pause," said Jeff Levi, PhD, Executive Director of TFAH. "As the U.S. prepares for the threat of a possible pandemic flu, we must make caring for our kids a priority, not an afterthought."

The groups recommend that the federal government vastly increase its stockpile of antiviral medication for children, do more testing of pandemic vaccines for children, and increase efforts to understand and deal with the effects that school closings would have on our communities.

View the AAP and TFAH recommended specific actions to protect children in the event of a flu pandemic at:

<http://healthyamericans.org/reports/fluchildren/>

Or read the complete report at:

<http://healthyamericans.org/reports/fluchildren/KidsPandemicFlu.pdf>

Pandemic influenza funding update

By Aggie Leitheiser

Director of Emergency Preparedness, MDH

Federal funding for pandemic influenza preparedness continues for another year. The grant guidance encourages us to ensure our plans are operational, provide training for staff, exercise our plans and identify areas needing improvement. Minnesota received \$3 million this year (compared to \$3.9 million last year). An additional \$1.3 million was granted through the Hospital Preparedness Program for supplies, planning, and exercises. The state legislature provided \$3.9 million primarily for the purchase of antiviral medication and healthcare supplies for this biennium.

What does all this mean? We've been told to expect that federal funding is not likely to continue beyond the current grant year. So the increased support this year is a chance to find the gaps and fill them as much as possible.

What are the results of the work on pandemic influenza so far? Local public health and healthcare system staff report that the pandemic planning emphasis this past year paid off in better preparedness and understanding in response to the major events experienced recently. The expanded relationships through various meetings, trainings, and discussions have strengthened our collective understanding of how response activities and roles fit together and who we can call in an emergency. While there is still plenty of work ahead, we can be proud of the updated plans, the multiple community meetings, and better partnerships that are in place.

This coming year will focus on understanding how vaccines and antiviral medications will be prioritized and dispensed, how alternatives to usual healthcare delivery systems can be used to stretch limited in-patient care, which communication messages can be developed now and which are situational, what planning issues need to be addressed to continue service operations, and how to better engage the public in discussions about limited resources during a pandemic.

The state will be conducting at least one pandemic influenza focused exercise and we encourage our partners to consider how to incorporate pandemic issues into trainings and exercises. Additionally, we need to continue to work together to use our growing skills to improve our response to any type of disaster or emergency.

Peer-reviewed online database showcases local, county and state pandemic planning

State and local health departments that are planning for an influenza pandemic can look to a new online resource that potentially will save them both time and money. The database highlights more than 130 peer-reviewed promising practices from four countries, more than 22 states and 33 local governments. Minnesota has six practices featured on the site. Launched in September, the database is a project of two organizations, the Center for Infectious Disease Research & Policy (CIDRAP) at the University of Minnesota, and the Pew Center on the States, a division of The Pew Charitable Trusts.

The database contains tangible, downloadable tools that communities across America have developed to address three key areas in pandemic planning: altering standards of care, communicating effectively about pandemic flu, and delaying and diminishing the impact of a pandemic. Each practice is adaptable to other communities across the country and can be used to enhance existing plans.

Promising practices in the database include communities' plans to engage schools and families to reduce the spread of influenza, to manage scarce medical resources, and to train people to care for ill family members at home.

"This database is an excellent resource for public health officials to learn from each other and ensure that they have in place promising strategies in the event of a flu pandemic." said Jim O'Hara, managing director of Health and Human Services Policy at The Pew Charitable Trusts.

"It is crucial that states, counties and cities continually enhance their preparedness for pandemic influenza," said Michael Osterholm, PhD, MPH, CIDRAP director. "This online database represents an important step by providing concrete, peer-reviewed materials to further public health preparedness."

Practices in the database were assessed by experts, including CIDRAP staff, a diverse group of national reviewers, and members of the project's advisory committee. In addition to viewing the practices, visitors to the Web site may submit additional practices for consideration. To check out this exciting new resource, go to www.PandemicPractices.org.

Education and Training

Pandemic Influenza in Pediatrics: Justice, Scarce Resources, and Tough Decisions (The 2007 Westgate Pediatric Ethics Forum)

Date: Friday, Nov. 16, 2007

Time: Noon to 4:00 p.m.

Location: Education Center, Children's Hospital – Minneapolis Campus, 2525 Chicago Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN

Featured Speakers:

- Arthur Caplan, PhD Director, Center for Bioethics, University of Pennsylvania
Generational Justice and Treatment of Children in a Severe Pandemic
- Michael Osterholm, PhD, MPH, School of Public Health, Center for Infectious Disease and Policy, University of Minnesota
The Effects of Severe Pandemic Influenza on Children

Hospital Policy, State Mandates, and Children: A Panel Discussion

- Arthur Caplan, PhD,
- Michael Osterholm, PhD
- John Hick, MD, Medical Director, Bioterrorism and Disaster Preparedness, Hennepin County Medical Center
- Aggie Leitheiser, Director of Emergency Preparedness, Minnesota Department of Health
- Craig Vana, Associate Superintendent for Emergency and Crisis Management, Minneapolis Public Schools
- Dorothy Vawter, PhD, Associate Director, Minnesota Center for Health Care Ethics
- Patsy Stinchfield, RN, CNP, Director of Infectious Disease, Children's of Minnesota
- Don Brunnquell, PhD, Director, Office of Ethics, Children's of Minnesota

The event is free but REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED. Additional information and registration is available at: <http://xpedio02.childrensmn.org/stellent/groups/Public/@XCP/@Web/@WhatsNew/documents/PolicyReferenceProcedure/web117081.asp>

Or contact Margo Dempsey at 612-813-6123 or margo.dempsey@childrensmn.org

Exercises

Exercise Winter Willow: lessons identified Over 5,000 people from a large number of United Kingdom organizations representing government, industry and the voluntary sector participated in Exercise Winter Willow. The goal of the exercise was to assess preparation for the major disruptive challenges that would follow an influenza pandemic.

The report outlines the results of the exercise evaluation and can be found at:

http://www.ukresilience.info/news/winter_willow_lessons.aspx

Pandemic Flu Digest

Resources of interest

- *Pandemic Influenza: An Analysis of State Preparedness and Response Plans*. Congressional Review Service report to Congress (Sept. 2007): http://www.opencrs.com/rpts/RL34190_20070924.pdf
- H5N1 virus targets include organs, placenta, fetus: <http://www.cidrap.umn.edu/cidrap/content/influenza/avianflu/news/oct0207organsmh.html>
- New report says pandemic is overdue, but companies and nations are ill-prepared to cope with the impact: <http://global.marsh.com/news/press/092707.php>
- H5N1 mutation that could spark pandemic identified: <http://www.cidrap.umn.edu/cidrap/content/influenza/avianflu/news/oct0507avian.html>
- Pandemic planning checklist released for law enforcement: <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/workplaceplanning/lawenforcement.html>
- Pandemic planning checklist released for correctional facilities: <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/workplaceplanning/correctionchecklist.html>
- New resources for schools have been added to the Minnesota Department of Education's *Pandemic Influenza--All Hazards Planning* webpage: http://education.state.mn.us/mde/About_MDE/News_Center/Avian_Influenza_Pandemic_Preparation/index.html

Communication

The Pandemic Influenza Newsletter is always looking for good ideas (brief recaps of your successful strategies, awesome initiatives, or stellar exercises) from regional and local partners. To submit your good news, contact Denise Dunn, 651-201-5560 or denise.dunn@health.state.mn.us

The Last Word...

A unique *Promising Practice* from the Colorado Department of Public Health Colorado has taken online community engagement a step further by creating a reality-type exercise with citizens, who will be selected to compete only after they submit a video through YouTube. Competitors can submit a video in which they describe five things they could not live without.

Winners will live in a house for a multi-day period and undergo televised challenges to acquaint them with potential situations they may face during a pandemic. A Denver TV station is slated to cover competitors' experiences each evening as part of its regular broadcast. The state health department paid the media company with which it contracted, but planners obtained the rest of the materials through donations.

The reality show competition is part of a larger campaign to encourage greater awareness of preparedness issues in Colorado. The department also partnered with a spring water company and a grocery store to offer education and sales on preparedness kit supplies.

Take a look at this creative undertaking at: <http://www.whatifcolorado.com>

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Visit the MDH Web site at:

<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/newsletters/panflu/index.html>