



**MLS Influenza Laboratory Update #1
Influenza A/H3 in a
Minnesota Long-term Care Facility
September 14, 2010**

Purpose of this Message

To inform the laboratory community about a small cluster of Influenza A/H3 in a Minnesota Long-term Care Facility.

Background

Influenza has been identified in a Minnesota long-term care facility in the 7-county Minneapolis – St. Paul metropolitan area. Specimens from three residents of this facility tested positive for influenza A by rapid test and were later confirmed as having influenza A/H3 by PCR testing methods at the MDH Public Health Laboratory. Further testing is being conducted to determine if the identified strain of influenza is the same as the H3 component of the 2010-2011 influenza vaccine.

The A/H3 strain of influenza has been circulating at low levels in the United States over the summer. It has been detected in sporadic outbreaks, mostly in schools, daycares or long-term care facilities, but has not been circulating among the general public at detectable levels. In Minnesota, surveillance for hospitalized cases and out-patient visits for influenza-like illness, and laboratory surveillance have not detected any significant increase in influenza activity at this time.

It is unclear whether this cluster of cases represents sporadic influenza activity that can occur outside the usual influenza season or the start of the influenza season in Minnesota.

Laboratories Please Submit Specimens

Until this season's influenza strains are well-characterized, MDH-Public Health Laboratory (PHL) is requesting that laboratories performing rapid testing methods (EIA, IFA, DFA, PCR, etc.) submit a few patient specimens that are positive for influenza (both A and B) each week for surveillance purposes. In addition, virology laboratories are being asked to continue to submit all viral culture isolates positive for influenza. More information about specimen submission during the influenza season will be sent out in the near future.

Antiviral Medications:

There are two antiviral medications currently recommended by the CDC for influenza treatment and prophylaxis, Tamiflu® (oseltamivir) and Relenza® (zanamivir). Tamiflu® is available as a pill or liquid and Relenza® is a powder that is inhaled.

Please see the CDC website for current information regarding antiviral medication:

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/antivirals/index.htm>

It is not too Early to Vaccinate for Influenza:

Vaccine given now will provide protection through the full influenza season. Everyone 6 months of age and older should be vaccinated this year. Providers should offer flu vaccine at any opportunity, for every patient. Your recommendation makes the difference in convincing patients to seek influenza vaccine.

The following groups are especially important to vaccinate either because they are at high risk of serious flu-related complications or because they live with or care for people at high risk:

- Pregnant women
- Children younger than 5, but especially children younger than 2 years old
- People 65 years of age and older
- People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions
- Severely obese persons
- People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
- Native Americans and Alaska natives
- African Americans, Hispanics and other racial/ethnic minorities who continue to show vaccination coverage rates lower than whites
- People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu, including:
 - Health care workers
 - People who live with or care for children less than 6 months of age
 - People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu

For Long-term Care Facilities:

Conduct surveillance for respiratory illness, even if it is early in the season. Use influenza testing to identify outbreaks early so that infection control measures can be promptly initiated to prevent the spread of influenza in the facility.

Please see the following websites for information on the prevention and control of influenza outbreaks in long-term care facilities:

<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/flu/ltc/index.html>

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol/longtermcare.htm>

Thank you,

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****Please forward this to all appropriate personnel within your institution and Health System****

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