

Glen Abbot Ltd.

Swine Flu Briefing 12 – 11/05/2009

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Current Situation:

29 countries have officially reported 4379 cases of influenza A(H1N1) infection.

Mexico has reported 1626 laboratory confirmed human cases of infection, including 45 deaths. The United States has reported 2254 laboratory confirmed human cases, including two deaths. Canada has reported 280 laboratory confirmed human cases, including one death. Costa Rica has reported eight laboratory confirmed human cases, including one death.

The United Kingdom has reported 39 cases with no deaths.

The following countries have reported laboratory confirmed cases with no deaths - Argentina (1), Australia (1), Austria (1), Brazil (6), China, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (1), Colombia (1), Denmark (1), El Salvador (2), France (12), Germany (11), Guatemala (1), Ireland (1), Israel (7), Italy (9), Japan (4), Netherlands (3), New Zealand (7), Panama (3), Poland (1), Portugal (1), Republic of Korea (3), Spain (93), Sweden (1), Switzerland (1).

The USA has developed a PCR diagnostic test kit to detect the H1N1 virus and has now distributed test kits to all states in the U.S. and Puerto Rico. The test kits are being shipped internationally as well. This will allow states and other countries to test for this new virus. This increase in testing capacity is likely to result in an increase in the number of reported confirmed cases in this country, which should provide a more accurate picture of the burden of disease in the United States.

WHO to Review Alert Phases

The following article appeared in the UK Financial Times and reflects the increasing level of criticism which I have heard of the over reaction n (alleged!) by the WHO. The move to Phase 5 so quickly has caused many organisations problems

The World Health Organisation is considering an overhaul of its pandemic ratings system amid growing criticism that it provoked unnecessary alarm by rapidly escalating its warnings over swine flu.

Officials at the agency's headquarters in Geneva said they were discussing changes to the six-point scale to make clear in the future the gravity of the threat posed by a new virus.

The move comes against a backdrop of intensifying attacks on the WHO, which has been accused of "crying wolf" over its decisions to raise its pandemic alert from level three to an unprecedented five. This comes amid indications it may even go to the maximum level six.

Media organisations initially seized on the raising of the alerts in front page headlines around the world, but as it has emerged that the death toll has stayed relatively low, so the criticism has mounted. As of Thursday morning the WHO had confirmed 2,099 cases in 23 countries, including 44 deaths.

While designed to identify and classify the spread of a new flu virus between humans around the world, the WHO's system of pandemic alerts provides no indication of the danger of the virus.

Even if the A (H1N1) virus in Mexico proves no more lethal than a typical seasonal flu, it could still soon trigger the highest level six WHO pandemic alert once it has been identified as spreading widely between humans in different parts of the world.

Margaret Chan, WHO director general, has stressed that an increase to level six is a technical change which does not mean that people around the world are at serious threat.

In an interview with the FT earlier this week Ms Chan defended the organisation's public statements. "I am not predicting the pandemic will blow up but if I miss it and we don't prepare, I fail. I'd rather over-

Schools and the threat to businesses

One of the earliest actions taken during this outbreak has been to close schools when a single case of H1N1 has been identified. This is an understandably cautious reaction but will give rise to problems for many businesses.

Have you considered in your pandemic plans what this could mean for your organisation? During a full scale pandemic this evidence clearly suggests that schools would not remain open for long.

You should consider the demographics of your staff and from this look at whether you could be more severely hit by such closures (and remember nurseries would also shut).

If your plan doesn't reflect this then you could find the level of absence higher than planned. Time for a quick review??

Future Briefings

Given that changes are now happening slowly I will not issue a weekend briefing unless there are significant developments. I will issue another briefing on Thursday of this week unless there are significant changes.

If anyone is based near Leeds, I am talking at a conference there on Tuesday morning and would be happy to organise for others to come along.

All briefings are available at our website:

www.glenabbot.co.uk

Training and Consultancy

We provide specific pandemic training courses both publicly and bespoke to companies. If you are interested please contact me directly or email Geoff Howard at Continuity Shop (goward@continuityshop.com).

We can also help organisation review or create plans so if you need any assistance please contact me via this email or Andrew Sinclair on Andrew.sinclair@glenabbot.co.uk. Our office number is 01738 580580.

Yours sincerely



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