



Glen Abbot Ltd.

Swine Flu Briefing 24 – 13/07/2009

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Current Situation:

The total number of clinically confirmed cases now appears to have passed 100,000 although increasingly these figures seem to be of little value as the actual number of cases is likely to be considerably higher as the world moved to 'treatment' rather than 'containment' strategies. This move, which was always planned, means that many cases will not be clinically confirmed unless the patient shows more severe symptoms.

The US Government suspect there are at least one million cases in the country already although official confirmed cases are only around 37,000.

The UK has seen the first death from swine flu where the sufferer did not have underlying health problems.

Professor Steve Field, chairman of the Royal College of GPs, said the death was not a significant development in terms of the pandemic's progress. "We see some deaths each winter in healthy people, or apparently healthy people, through the seasonal flu," he said.

To come to work or not....

The debate continues on when and if someone should come to work. The position for those with flu like symptom is quite clear; DON'T! For those in a household where flu is present the view changes regularly. Here is the current advice from the US Government:

- Stay home if you are sick. If you have symptoms of influenza-like illness, stay home for 7 days after symptoms begin or until you have been symptom-free for 24 hours, whichever is longer. Following these recommendations will help keep you from infecting others and spreading the virus.
- Employees who are well but who have an ill family member at home with pandemic H1N1 flu can go to work as usual. These employees should monitor their health every day, notify their supervisor and stay home if they become ill. Employees who have an underlying medical condition or who are pregnant should call their health care provider for advice, because they might need to receive influenza antiviral drugs to prevent illness.

HR Issues

Much of my time at the moment is spent on helping HR departments get their policies in place. A brief summary of where to start is:

- As far as possible stick to your current policies. This causes less confusion and makes implementation easier.
- That said, do review these policies to ensure they meet the increased levels of absence you might expect.
- Examine the demographics of your workforce; do you have a predominantly young group (under 50)? If so there may be higher absences as H1N1 is hitting this sector hard
- Do you have large numbers of employees with young children? Again this could hit hard as children spread the disease effectively.
- Do you have large numbers of single parents? If schools and nurseries continue to shut then you could find a larger than expected level of absence as children have to remain at home.

Some organisations have considered setting up their own crèche, my view is not to go down that route. Firstly you would need qualified personnel to run such a facility, and if you do and children catch flu on your premises are you liable? And finally when the pandemic is over would you be able to remove this benefit from staff? You may have committed your organisation to an expensive long-term cost.

A will be doing a further series of webinars over the next three months for the BCI and the first one will feature HR policies and practices. I will include the dates and times in the next briefing in case anyone wants to listen in.

A test.....

So how much do you really know about H1N1? Well I have picked up this on line test from Hawaii. Sadly Glen Abbot would not cover my expenses to travel there to gather further information on your behalf.....

<http://www.coralcrossthegame.org/>

And before anyone asks yes I did get 100% at the first attempt!

Past Briefings

All previous briefings are available at our website:

www.glenabbot.co.uk

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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 (ghoward@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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