

Glen Abbot Ltd.

Swine Flu Briefing 13 – 14/05/2009

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Current Situation:

Mexico has reported 2059 laboratory confirmed human cases of infection, including 56 deaths. The United States has reported 3009 laboratory confirmed human cases, including three deaths. Canada has reported 358 laboratory confirmed human cases, including one death. Costa Rica has reported eight laboratory confirmed human cases, including one death.

The United Kingdom has 68 with no deaths (63 in England, 5 in Scotland)

The following countries have reported laboratory confirmed cases with no deaths - Argentina (1), Australia (1), Austria (1), Brazil (8), China (3, comprising 1 in China, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, and 2 in mainland China), Colombia (6), Cuba (1), Denmark (1), El Salvador (4), Finland (2), France (13), Germany (12), Guatemala (3), Ireland (1), Israel (7), Italy (9), Japan (4), Netherlands (3), New Zealand (7), Norway (2), Panama (29), Poland (1), Portugal (1), Republic of Korea (3), Spain (98), Sweden (2), Switzerland (1), Thailand (2).

A History Lesson...

Given that many of us think this is the early stage of a pandemic and that it will return as the weather turns cold in the northern hemisphere, the WHO have given out the following information about how this has happened in the past.

During the previous century, the 1918 pandemic began mild and returned, within six months, in a much more lethal form. The pandemic that began in 1957 started mild, and returned in a somewhat more severe form, though significantly less devastating than seen in 1918. The 1968 pandemic began relatively mild, with sporadic cases prior to the first wave, and remained mild in its second wave in most, but not all, countries.

So where are we now?

Well again the WHO have given the following view.

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The H1N1 virus strain causing the current outbreaks is a new virus that has not been seen previously in either humans or animals. Although firm conclusions cannot be reached at present, scientists anticipate that pre-existing immunity to the virus will be low or non-existent, or largely confined to older population groups.

H1N1 appears to be more contagious than seasonal influenza. The secondary attack rate of seasonal influenza ranges from 5% to 15%. Current estimates of the secondary attack rate of H1N1 range from 22% to 33%.

In these early days of the outbreaks, some scientists speculate that the full clinical spectrum of disease caused by H1N1 will not become apparent until the virus is more widespread. This, too, could alter the current disease picture, which is overwhelmingly mild outside Mexico.

I don't have flu but....

I have been asked what the current advice is for someone who does not have flu but lives in a house where others do have the virus,

I have picked this quote from the NHS 24 website:

If you have been in close contact with a probable or confirmed case of swine flu and do not have flu-like symptoms, you should stay at home and seek an assessment by the NHS as to whether you should continue to stay at home.

Infectious period

Another question I have had is about how long someone might be infectious and how early. Here is a quote from the Scottish Government website:

The symptoms of pandemic flu would probably be similar to those of seasonal flu, but they could be more severe and cause more serious complications. A key message during a pandemic should, however, be that, in case of doubt, assume that an infection is pandemic flu, and act accordingly. It is better that someone stays at home for a couple of days with what might turn out to be a normal cold, than go into work or school with the early symptoms of pandemic flu and pass the flu virus on to others.

*The **incubation period** (the time from being exposed to the virus to showing symptoms of infection) is from one to four days: for most people, it will be two to three days.*

In terms of the **infectious period** (how long you are infectious to others), people are most infectious soon after they develop symptoms, and remain infectious to some extent until the symptoms disappear. In general, adults can continue to spread flu virus for up to five days, and children for up to seven days, but occasionally longer. Over this period, the amount of virus, and therefore the infection risk to others, will decline as symptoms improve, but does not disappear until the symptoms themselves have disappeared.

How long does the virus last?

Advice on how long the H1N1 virus can last once it has left a human has been amended to the following:

Flu virus could be transferred to hands from hard surfaces for up to 24 hours after the surface has been contaminated and from soft items for up to two hours after, albeit in very low quantities after 15 minutes.

This is considerably less than previous estimates (which were up to 72 hours). Again this is an official view from the Scottish Government.

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. 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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