



Glen Abbot Ltd.

Swine Flu Briefing 29 – 16/08/2009

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Current Situation:

Again there is little new from around the world this week. I'm working in Houston this week so I have been reviewing the approach and concerns to H1N1 from across the Atlantic to see if there is anything to learn for other areas.

The H1N1 influenza virus is the dominant influenza virus in circulation in the world. According to a WHO Global Influenza Surveillance Network (GISN) report dated August 4th, 71% of all influenza viruses currently detected globally are the new H1N1.

The new H1N1 accounts for 66% of influenza viruses in the Northern Hemisphere and 89% of influenza viruses in the Southern Hemisphere. There are indications that disease may be decreasing in South America and part of Australia. Disease associated with new H1N1 influenza is continuing to increase in southern Africa.

Over this past week, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cameroon, Madagascar, East Timor and Zambia reported their first confirmed cases of influenza A (H1N1)v. During the same period Japan, South Korea, Nicaragua, Mauritius, Iraq, Samoa, Ghana, Occupied Palestine Territory and Ireland all confirmed their first death due to this virus.

How long to stay away?

The advice seems to change regularly and given the mild nature of the current strain the time seems to decrease as seen from this article:

The US based CDC recommends that people with influenza-like illness remain at home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100° F [37.8°C]), or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medications.

This is a change from the previous recommendation that ill persons stay home for 7 days after illness onset or until 24 hours after the resolution of symptoms, whichever was longer.

Many people with influenza illness will continue shedding influenza virus 24 hours after their fevers go away, but at lower levels than during their fever.

Schools

There is no evidence that any government (including the UK) are planning to delay the opening of schools after summer holidays to prevent the spread.

In the USA the government is urging parents to have a backup plan for caring for kids in case they are hit by swine flu once the new school year begins.

The closure of schools as the autumn starts and cases rise is likely to cause significant levels of absence for companies as parents find childcare increasingly difficult.

For any organisation this would be a good time to consider the demographics of your workforce. If you have large numbers of younger staff, or staff with children at school then you may be disproportionately hit and your plans should reflect this.

Legal Action

I have mentioned too many people that organisations should be careful about what they do and what they promise during the pandemic. I know America has a more litigious culture than many but here is one small article:

The family has filed court papers saying they plan to sue the city (New York), claiming it was negligent in its response to the outbreak and that schools established no procedures for coping with the illness. The mayor has said the city did nothing wrong.

Panic, what panic?

To show just how easy it is for the word pandemic to cause panic and over reaction I include this article about India:

In Pune, the streets were half-empty, the usual crowds shunned the shopping malls and many workers stopped showing up at offices. With schools closed, worried parents kept their children shut inside.

Many who did venture out wore surgical masks, despite a shortage that sent the price of a single mask skyrocketing from 5 rupees (10 cents) to 150 rupees (\$3).

Who will be priorities for vaccines?

As vaccine availability comes closer many people are asking just who the 'priority cases' are? In the UK the NHS have issued the following information:

- People aged between six months and 65 years in the clinically at-risk groups for seasonal flu
- Pregnant women, subject to licensing by the European Medicines Agency, which will indicate whether it can be given throughout pregnancy or only at certain stages of pregnancy
- Household contacts of people with compromised immune systems
- People aged 65 and over in the current seasonal flu vaccine clinical at-risk groups

Past Briefings

All previous 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 (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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