

Glen Abbot Ltd.

Swine Flu Briefing 27 – 02/08/2009

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Current Situation:

Based on information from the EU as of today there are 184 870, including 1 252 deaths. This refers only to clinically identified cases so the actual number will be considerably above that.

In England officials suggest the number of new cases has 'plateaued' with 110,000 new reported cases this week up from 100,000 the week before. There seems to be a big drop in five to 14-year-olds consulting GPs, although this maybe be due to the start of the school holidays.

Officials have also said that more than half of children taking Tamiflu suffer side-effects such as nausea and insomnia. Sir Liam Donaldson the Chief Medical Officer of England has said "There's still flu around and there's no sense in which it's gone away", he said. "We're expecting a very big surge in the autumn, but we think this slowdown in the increase may give us a bit of breathing space to get on with our planning and ensure all the necessary measures are in place for the autumn."

Some more history

I know some of you like to understand more about previous pandemics to help put the current outbreak in some sort of perspective. Again as I have said before, the virus seems to have become less severe with successive pandemics, but here is some information you may find interesting.

	1918-19 (Spanish Flu)	1957 (Asian Flu)	1968 (Hong Kong Flu)
Who was most affected?	Fatalities occurred in previously healthy people 15-35 years of age.	Deaths occurred in persons with underlying disease conditions	Deaths occurred in persons with underlying disease conditions
Treatments?	An effective influenza vaccine was not available until 1933	Vaccines and antiviral medication were available but supplies were not adequate to meet need	Vaccines and antiviral medication were available but supplies were not adequate to meet need

Glen Abbot Ltd

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Good advice and clarifications

After my Webinar for the BCI this week there were a number of points raised and I thought the best source of replies was to use official information from the NHS in the UK. So here are some facts that might help you in planning.

How long does the virus live on surfaces?

The flu virus can live on a hard surface for up to 24 hours, and a soft surface for around 20 minutes

What is the incubation period for swine flu?

According to the Health Protection Agency, the incubation period for swine flu (time between infection and appearance of symptoms) can be up to seven days, but is most likely to be between two and five days. It is, however, too early to be able to provide details on virus characteristics, including incubation period, with absolute certainty at this time.

When are people most infectious?

People are most infectious to others soon after they develop symptoms, although they continue to shed the virus (for example, in coughs and sneezes) for up to five days (seven days in children). People become less infectious as their symptoms subside, and once their symptoms are gone, they are no longer considered infectious to others.

Should we expect a more severe second wave of the pandemic in the winter?

Features of previous flu pandemics suggest that the current viral strain will become even more widespread in the autumn or winter, causing more illness and death. It is possible that the virus will mutate (change) into a more potent strain.

Should I go to work or school if I have been in contact with someone who I know has swine flu?

Yes, as long as you do not have flu-like symptoms. If you are feeling well, you should go about your normal activities, including going to school or work

Are alcohol handrubs better than soap and water?

Both alcohol handrubs and washing with soap and water are important in minimising the risk of spreading swine flu - they both deactivate the flu virus. Alcohol handrub can only be used on visibly clean hands; if hands are dirty, soap and water should be used. Handrubs are useful where there is no easy access to a place to wash and dry your hands.

Is it safe to use public transport now we are in a pandemic?

Yes. Public transport has not been closed during previous pandemics, and while there is a small additional risk to the public, this is no greater than using other public places. Anyone who has the flu or feels unwell should stay at home and not travel.

Are the reports that 65,000 people are going to die true?

It is wrong to suggest there will be a particular number of deaths per day. Scientific and clinical experts can use sophisticated modelling techniques to help us understand how the virus may behave, but that is all they can do - be a guide, not a prediction.

How bad will it be?

Here is some information from a UK Government Cabinet Office report on the likely infection rate.

If the current growth in cases is sustained, a substantial wave of cases with up to 30% of the population experiencing symptoms could peak in early September, although a smaller but earlier peak is also possible. Alternatively, seasonal effects might substantially slow the epidemic in July and August – perhaps to the extent of leading to a decline in weekly cases in August, before resurgence in the autumn, for example when schools reopen. If so, the overall peak of the pandemic might be delayed to October or even later.

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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