



Glen Abbot Ltd.

Swine Flu Briefing 25 – 20/07/2009

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Current Situation:

Probably the biggest surprise at the moment is that the spread of the virus does not seem to be slowing down as we would have expected in the height of summer. It could, of course, be that the virus is simply so effective at human to human transmission that the increased temperatures in the northern hemisphere summer (except Scotland of course!) are not slowing it down. Fortunately the virus still seems to be mild and there are no reports from any country of a genuine mutation.

For most of the week the media seems to have been obsessed with death rates and I'm sure many of you have had this issue raised in your organisation. My advice is to completely ignore the scare stories. The percentage of deaths to identified number of cases is still very small, and almost all have been of those with underlying serious medical conditions.

One often made statistical mistake (deliberate or otherwise) is to quote the possible fatality rate and attribute it to the total population of a country. This produces a high figure of course, but it is inaccurate. Remember you cannot die of the flu if you have not caught it! Any percentage of fatalities has to be of those **infected** which is expected to be 30% of the population.

Another area of concern raised this week is for pregnant women and unfortunately the advice in the UK from a number of 'official' sources is confused and contradictory. The Royal College of Midwives (RCM) says all expectant mothers should avoid crowded places and unnecessary travel. But the Department of Health (DoH) says only the "particularly concerned" should consider the advice.

An expectant mother could possibly suffer complications if they contract swine flu, for example pneumonia, breathing difficulties and dehydration, because their immune system is suppressed. Note though, that the NHS website stresses that most expectant mothers who contract swine flu will only have mild symptoms and recover within a week. HR Departments can expect question to be raised on this I would expect from any member of staff who is pregnant and who may be worried about travelling to work, especially if they use public transport. The only advice I can give is to follow the official line of the DoH until anything emerges to change it.

Argentinean health authorities have issued a nationwide alert after pigs in the country were confirmed to have the swine flu virus.

"We have detected clinical cases of the A(H1N1) influenza in a pig farm in Buenos Aires province, they have been confirmed by laboratory tests," the national farm and food standards agency Senasa, said.

The worry is not of course for the health of the pigs! The fear is that if a different flu virus was also to be caught by the same pigs then the mutation we worry about could start as pigs can host viruses that humans (and birds) can catch.

The 7 Ps of Pandemic Planning

At Glen Abbot we have developed an approach to help explain how you should plan for a pandemic based on the work we have done over the last few years. I have attached the handout we use so you can use it as a checklist. If anyone has any questions or if we can help you please let me know.

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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