



Glen Abbot Ltd.

Swine Flu Briefing 27/04/2009

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Author background: David is the only BCI Accredited Pandemic trainer and has prepared pandemic plans for many organisations. David is due to travel to China to talk on pandemics at the BCI's Conference in May.

Glen Abbot, the UK's leading Business Continuity consultancy will issue updates to all clients who may be concerned about the risk from the Swine Flu outbreak in Mexico.

There is currently little risk to UK businesses from this outbreak. The WHO Emergency Committee has left the pandemic alert level at 3 but it is being actively reviewed. There will be daily meetings this week in the WHO Emergency Committee.

Swine fever is well known and established, however this variant is new. It does however appear to respond to Oseltamivir (Tamiflu) and Relenza, the two main prophylactic drugs for treatment of flu. The UK has been recognised by the WHO as one of the best prepared countries in the world and as part of that preparation stocks of both Tamiflu and Relenza have been built up sufficient to treat the number of cases expected in a pandemic.

About the casualties

Misinformation is already being passed around, specifically that health care workers in Mexico have been extremely badly hit. This is inaccurate. Only two cases have been identified in the health care sector. The cases in the USA and New Zealand have all recovered or are recovering and showed only MILD ILI (Influenza like illnesses).

Cases are being reported in a number of countries, currently 20 are confirmed in the USA.

Although two people who have recently travelled from Mexico have been admitted to Monklands hospital, it is not yet confirmed that they are suffering from a swine fever related flu. It will be known later today whether they do in fact have the disease, however they are not seriously ill and their condition is not giving rise to concern.



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PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS : What should we be doing?

The most important action everyone can take during a possible flu pandemic is to raise their level of personal hygiene.

Careful hand washing, cleaning of hard surfaces such as door handles, tables tops and toilets will all help to reduce the potential spread. No specialist cleaning materials are needed.

Businesses should review their Pandemic and Business Continuity Plans immediately and ensure they are up to date. Monitoring of websites such as the World Health Organisation and the UK Department of Health will be good sources of information which is both accurate and timely.

The plans should include options such as the ability of staff to work from home, to reduce staffing in non critical areas (and perhaps train these staff to cover for absence in critical areas), reduce unnecessary face to face contact, restrict travel (especially to infected areas) and provide staff with clear, accurate and non sensational information.

About Influenza

Influenza is a viral disease which lasts from three to ten days and can be followed by fatigue for two or three weeks thereafter. It usually causes aching muscles and joints, headaches, cough and fever with a temperature of between 38o and 40oC. Influenza is highly contagious and its presence among a workforce is likely to promote anxiety in co-workers especially in situations where personal space is limited and staff work in close proximity to each other.

It is essential that personnel learn to recognise symptoms possibly consistent with influenza and that they report these symptoms promptly.

What are the symptoms of common influenza?

- Headache
- Severe weakness and fatigue
- Fever (38°C to 40°C).
- Dry cough
- Aching muscles and joints.
- A runny nose and sore throat
- Chest pains
- Lack of appetite
- Restless sleep
- Chills and shivering
- Indigestion
- Vomiting or diarrhoea

Treatment

- Drink as much as possible - you lose a lot of liquids during a fever
- Rest, preferably by staying in bed
- Try to get plenty of sleep
- If you have a cough, over-the-counter cough remedies may ease symptoms
- Avoid smoking and drinking alcohol
- Paracetamol or aspirin will reduce fever and muscle aches. Ibuprofen is also suitable.

How is Influenza spread?

Influenza is a viral disease that is passed from one person to another through the air. You can catch flu through breathing air containing the virus produced when an infected person talks, coughs or sneezes. You can also catch it through touching an infected person or surface contaminated with the virus and then touching your face.

Other important facts

- Both colds and flu are caused by a virus but the symptoms of influenza are usually more severe
- Antibiotics have no effect against influenza
- Damp or cold cannot cause influenza. However, sudden changes in temperature may cause the symptoms to appear more quickly
- People are seldom infected by the same type of influenza twice because resistance develops within two or four weeks. However, the influenza virus constantly mutates into slightly different versions of itself, which is one reason why vaccination is sometimes ineffective. The vaccination also needs to be done yearly to keep up the person's level of immunity
- It is possible to pass on the infection 1-3 days before you develop the symptoms yourself. You can also pass on the infection until 4 or 5 days after the onset of symptoms. Children, however, tend to be infectious for much longer

If you have any questions arising from this pres release please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



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