



Glen Abbot Ltd.

Swine Flu Briefing 32 – 06/09/2009

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Current Situation:

I'm on holiday this weekend so a slightly shorter briefing than usual, mainly due to internet access difficulties! Hopefully the key issues are still covered however.

UK Government Reduce Projected Death Rates

Predictions that 65,000 people could die from swine flu in the UK this winter are unlikely to be realised, latest figures suggest.

Government scientific advisors have revised the figure to produce a worst case scenario of 19,000 deaths. That is based on one in three people becoming infected, said Chief Medical Officer Professor Sir Liam Donaldson. Cases of swine flu continue to drop off with only 4,500 new cases in England last week.

Commenting on the reduced estimates, Sir Liam said the figures may be revised again once a vaccination programme is introduced.

"We want the NHS to plan for a worst case scenario."

He added: "We are very unlikely to see a peak before the second half of October, which is something we're pleased about because we're expecting to be able to use the vaccine during October."

One jab or two?

Scientists at Leicester University conducting a trial in humans on a swine flu vaccine have reported that one dose might be enough to produce a good immune response. So far most experts have said that two doses would be needed.

One of the scientists involved, Dr Iain Stephenson said:

"Results showed that the serum antibody responses were highest among subjects who received two doses of vaccine, however a single vaccine dose also induced responses associated with protection against influenza."

Other options?

Researchers in Hong Kong are harvesting antibodies from recovered swine flu patients in the hope of using them to treat people who become seriously ill with the disease this winter.

They expect the virus to become more aggressive in the coming winter months, which means more people will get seriously ill, need intensive hospital care or die.

The most interesting thing I felt was the following statement about how the virus would become more virulent without the need for mutation.

"The virus doesn't need to mutate, but a change in temperature, colder and drier weather will make the virus more aggressive and active and we expect more serious cases," said Ivan Hung, clinical assistant professor at the University of Hong Kong's department of medicine.

Antivirals for those in normal health?

Last week I mentioned that the WHO had changed its advice regarding use of antivirals for swine flu. The position for the UK is as follows (quoted directly from the NHS):

[WHO] advice suggests that while antivirals should always be given in serious cases, they may not always be necessary for otherwise healthy people.

..... this appeared to differ from the approach taken in the UK, where Tamiflu is being widely used.

However, the Department of Health said:

"We believe a safety-first approach of offering antivirals, when required, to everyone remains a sensible and responsible way forward. However, we will keep this policy under review as we learn more about the virus and its effects.

"The WHO recommendations are in fact in line with UK policy on antivirals. We have consistently said that many people with swine flu only get mild symptoms, and they may find bed rest and over-the-counter flu remedies work for them."

Art mirrors life.....

The actor in the U.K. Department of Health swine-flu advisory film has himself been stricken with the swine flu. "I was supposed to 'Catch it. Bin it. Kill it,' " says David McCusker, above, referring to the U.K. swine-flu tagline. "But instead I've been shivering, shaking and spreading it." McCusker, 30, quarantined himself upon getting the diagnosis, for health reasons and perhaps also due to embarrassment. "I've been getting lots of stick from mates," he admits.

Pandemic Course

I am running a pandemic course through Continuity Shop in London on 14 September. Please contact them directly (see email address below) or email me if you are interested in attending.

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 (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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