

Glen Abbot Ltd.

Swine Flu Briefing 10 – 07/05/2009

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Current Situation:

23 countries have officially reported 1893 cases of influenza A (H1N1) infection.

Mexico has reported 942 laboratory confirmed human cases of infection, including 29 deaths. The United States has reported 642 laboratory confirmed human cases, including two deaths.

The United Kingdom has 28 cases confirmed with no deaths.

The following countries have reported laboratory confirmed cases with no deaths - Austria (1), Canada (165), China, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (1), Colombia (1), Costa Rica (1), Denmark (1), El Salvador (2), France (5), Germany (9), Guatemala (1), Ireland (1), Israel (4), Italy (5), Netherlands (1), New Zealand (5), Portugal (1), Republic of Korea (2), Spain (73), Sweden (1), Switzerland (1).

Some History

I thought some of you might like to know a little more about swine flu and past problems.

In 1976 a new strain of swine flu started infecting people and worried U.S. health officials started widespread vaccination. More than 40 million people were vaccinated.

I have lifted the following from Wikipedia as a quick summary. There are lots of stories about how close the USA came to full scale mobilisation which if you are interested are worth looking for as an example of what might happen.

On February 5, 1976, in the United States an army recruit at Fort Dix said he felt tired and weak. He died the next day and four of his fellow soldiers were later hospitalized. Two weeks after his death, health officials announced that the cause of death was a new strain of swine flu. The strain, a variant of H1N1, is known as A/New Jersey/1976 (H1N1). It was detected only from January 19 to February 9 and did not spread beyond Fort Dix.

This new strain appeared to be closely related to the strain involved in the 1918 flu pandemic. Moreover, the ensuing increased surveillance uncovered another strain in circulation in the U.S.: A/Victoria/75 (H3N2) spread simultaneously, also caused illness, and persisted until March. Alarmed public-health officials decided action must be taken to head off another major pandemic, and urged President Gerald Ford that every person in the U.S. be vaccinated for the disease.

The vaccination program was plagued by delays and public relations problems. On October 1, 1976, the immunization program began and by October 11, approximately 40 million people, or about 24% of the population, had received swine flu immunizations. That same day, three senior citizens died soon after receiving their swine flu shots and there was a media outcry linking the deaths to the immunizations, despite the lack of positive proof. According to science writer Patrick Di Justo, however, by the time the truth was known — that the deaths were not proven to be related to the vaccine — it was too late. "The government had long feared mass panic about swine flu — now they feared mass panic about the swine flu vaccinations." This became a strong setback to the program.

There were reports of Guillain-Barré syndrome, a paralyzing neuromuscular disorder, affecting some people who had received swine flu immunizations. This syndrome is a rare side-effect of modern influenza vaccines, with an incidence of about one case per million vaccinations. As a result, Di Justo writes that "the public refused to trust a government-operated health program that killed old people and crippled young people." In total, less than 33% of the population had been immunized by the end of 1976. The National Influenza Immunization Program was effectively halted on Dec. 16.

From December 2005 to February 2009, 12 cases of human infection with swine influenza were confirmed. All but one person had contact with pigs. There was no evidence of human-to-human transmission in those cases.

Flu viruses mutate constantly, which is why the flu vaccine is changed every year, and they can swap DNA in a process called reassortment.

Seasonal flu kills between 250,000 and 500,000 people globally in an average year.

What now?

Well it looks like most experts are now predicting a pandemic in late 2009/early 2010 (see also earlier briefings).

I will start tomorrow to set out what actions you should be taking over the next few months to prepare for this.

Future Briefings

All briefings will be available at our website:

www.glenabbot.co.uk

My thanks to Continuity Shop for the use of their office in Shanghai.

As I have been travelling home from China today's briefing is later than usual. Normal service (jetlag allowing!) will be resumed on Friday.

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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