

fast FACTS...

about Sedgwick County Government



Pandemic Influenza (Flu) Update

March 7, 2008

Sedgwick County
Health Department

1900 E. 9th Street

Wichita, Kansas

67214

316-660-7300

www.sedgwickcounty.org

Local News:

Members of the Pandemic Influenza Work Group (PIWG) Steering Committee met on February 26th. The results of the recent survey of PIWG members were reviewed. Steering Committee members agreed to meet quarterly rather than monthly. In addition, the full PIWG meetings will become annual occurrences with a tabletop exercise conducted every six months. At the May PIWG Steering Committee meeting, members will discuss what should be included in the annual PIWG meeting to be held sometime in August or September.

Due to the change of frequency of meetings, updates will only be created and distributed on a quarterly basis.

PIWG Sub-committee Updates

Sub-committee chairs who were present gave the following updates on their groups' status:

Communications: Will begin working with the Faith-based subcommittee, developing preparedness and health messages for church bulletins.

Mass Pharmaceutical

Distribution: Working on their plan, finding challenges in not knowing how much medication would be received in the event of a pandemic. The subcommittee has discussed developing a tiered response based on supplies. Treatment will be the focus as opposed to prophylaxis.

Surveillance, Monitoring and

Investigation: Reported that some area clinics have been providing influenza reports, although they are not mandated to do so. Large clinics and those the subcommittee members have relationships with will be approached to do the same.

Special Needs Populations (elderly and disabled): A tabletop exercise based on an emergency situation is being developed to test this subcommittee. The exercise will take place in March.

Faith-based: Meetings have been scheduled with the Director of Inter-Faith Ministries and leaders of various religious denominations to learn more about these ministries. There is a warehouse filled with medical supplies for missionary trips. This is part of a national program; however, the supplies could be utilized during a pandemic.

First Responder and Medical First

Receiver: Samples of a new mask for aerosol treatments have been received. EMS and the Wichita Police Department will rely on powered air purifying respirators in the event of a flu pandemic. The Sheriff's Department will use full body protection.

Animal Surveillance: The chair, Ellie Shore, has resigned her position. A new chair for this subcommittee is being sought.

Special Populations (children): Continuing work on their plan. Communicable diseases are currently being tracked in childcare facilities.

Mass Care: Met with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment to discuss a tiered response medical team. The basic supportive care plan is in the operational phase. Job descriptions are being created along with ideas for just-in-time training.

Upcoming meetings: The next PIWG steering team meeting will be Monday, May 12 at 9 a.m. at 1530 S. Oliver, Suite 270 (Upstairs).



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State News:

Townsend Peterson, senior curator at the University of Kansas Natural History Museum and Biodiversity Research Center, received a \$100,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to study the possible spread of avian influenza to America. Peterson will use the grant to assemble a team of researchers to map areas of the continent that are at a potentially high risk from the bird flu. The USDA offered Peterson the grant based on his conclusion that the government had not properly monitored the possible spread and evolution of bird flu on this continent. Work is scheduled to begin this spring.

National News:

A new Web site is available that contains personal preparedness information. It was developed by the National Citizens' Pandemic Alliance with the purpose of informing citizens of what they can do to prepare and protect themselves. A recommendation on the site is for households to have three months of food, water, medications, and basic supplies on-hand, which is an increase from the two week amount that has been widely suggested. For more information, visit <http://www.getpandemicready.org>.

Health experts cited in the Washington Post state that the federal government's plans for managing a pandemic flu outbreak do not adequately account for the overwhelming strain an outbreak would place on hospitals and public health systems. The Director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota adds that even a moderate-sized pandemic would quickly compromise hospital supply chains, which rely on just-in-time system for shipment of drug and medical supplies. Local stakeholders would need billions more in sustained federal aid to create the medical capacity necessary to treat the surge of victims that would result from a serious flu outbreak.

International News:

As of February 20, 2008 there have been a total of 362 confirmed human cases and 228 confirmed deaths due to H5N1 avian influenza. The reported number of cases and deaths due to H5N1 avian influenza for 2008 is 13 and 11 respectively. None of these occurred in the United States.

During a bird flu conference in Bangkok, China, Scott Newman, the international wildlife coordinator for avian influenza for the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization, reported there is no evidence that wild birds are the cause for the apparent spread of the H5N1 virus from Asia to parts of Europe, Africa and the Middle East. Fecal tests on approximately 350,000 healthy birds worldwide have only fielded a few positive H5N1 results. In instances and places where wild birds were found with the disease, there were no concurrent outbreaks of the virus in poultry. Newman stressed the need to focus attention on the poultry trade and particularly smuggling, adding that these factors may instead be spreading and sustaining the disease.



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