

fast FACTS...

about Sedgwick County Government



Pandemic Influenza (Flu) Update

July 3, 2007

Sedgwick County
Health Department

1900 E. 9th Street

Wichita, Kansas

67214

316-660-7300

www.sedgwickcounty.org

PIWG Sub-committee Updates:

The June PIWG Steering Committee meeting was cancelled, however, the subcommittees reported on their progress.

- **Faith-based:** Sending surveys to 500 faith-based organizations in Sedgwick County in order to assess their preparedness levels, needs, and available resources for an influenza pandemic. Three priorities have been identified by the subcommittee: helping churches put pandemic flu information on their Web sites, addressing sheltering issues, and pandemic flu plan development.
- **Surveillance, Monitoring, and Investigation:** Working closely with Dr. Andrew Miller, SYRIS Product Manager, to evaluate a new syndromic surveillance system. Committee members are also in the process of selecting two additional sites in Sedgwick County to participate in the United States Influenza Sentinel Providers Surveillance Network. Currently Sedgwick County only has two sentinel sites.
- **Communications:** Met June 28th and discussed strategies for promoting seasonal influenza prevention during the back-to-school season.
- **Mass Pharmaceutical Distribution:** Continues to work on a written operational plan for mass vaccination. They have received new information on the amount of drugs the Sedgwick County Health Department can expect to receive and are updating the plan with this information.

International News:

As of June 15, 2007 there have been 313 confirmed human cases and 191 confirmed deaths due to H5N1 avian influenza. None of these have occurred in the United States.

An international team of scientists report using antibodies derived from immune cells from recent human survivors of H5N1 avian influenza to successfully treat H5N1-infected mice, as well as protect them from an otherwise lethal dose of the virus. Four Vietnamese adults diagnosed with H5N1 influenza infection between January 2004 and February 2005 donated their blood after they had recovered.

Upcoming meetings:

- The next PIWG Steering Committee meeting is July 17, 2007.
- The next PIWG all member meeting is September 18, 2007.



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National Update:

Researchers from the Food Policy Institute at Rutgers New Jersey Agriculture Experimental Station recently conducted a survey to gauge the public's knowledge of H5N1 avian influenza and to determine how Americans would respond if the virus were found in United States poultry. Most of the 1,200 respondents said their risk of contracting H5N1 was low, but many believed the risk to other people was higher. When asked what they would do if the H5N1 virus turned up in U.S. chickens, 40% of respondents said they would stop eating chicken products, rather than limiting their risk by using proper cooking and food handling procedures. The research showed that many also believed it is easy to identify H5N1-contaminated raw meat.

United States researchers report there is a new device that can detect 92 different viruses, including several strains of avian influenza virus. There have been difficulties in monitoring influenza because spot tests cannot identify the precise strain. When testing people for H5N1 avian influenza, the World Health Organization (WHO) uses specialized labs that can spend weeks first growing and then testing tiny samples of virus. The new device works in just four hours to identify the precise strain. It was 97 percent accurate during testing. The device is not portable and costs between \$400,000 and \$500,000, making it difficult for many labs or agencies to purchase.

In May, Congress passed its spending bill but not before cutting some pandemic funds. The legislation was passed without \$650 million in pandemic preparedness spending that had been included in an earlier version of the bill. There was reduced funding of \$625 million for vaccines, other medical supplies, and diagnostic and surveillance tools. There was also a \$25 million reduction to compensate individuals for any injuries caused by H5N1 influenza vaccines. The final bill does include some money for avian flu: \$161 million for foreign operations under the State Department and \$13.2 million for research and monitoring by the Fish and Wildlife Service, Geological Survey, and National Park Service. The funds are for activities through the rest of the fiscal year 2007, which ends September 30th. The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) is expected to receive information from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) regarding state pandemic influenza funding in approximately 3 1/2 weeks.



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