

fast FACTS...

about Sedgwick County Government



Pandemic Influenza (Flu) Update

September 5, 2008

Sedgwick County
Health Department

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Local News:

Members of the Pandemic Influenza Work Group (PIWG) steering committee met on August 21st. No sub-committee updates were given. Instead, the group focused on expectations for the October meeting. Each subcommittee is required to prepare a three to five minute presentation in which they highlight what has been accomplished by the subcommittee since its formation, what work still needs to be done (if any), and what new policies, procedures, or partnerships exist because of the work done by their subcommittee.

The October meeting will also include a discussion that will illustrate the PIWG's understanding of the Sedgwick County Pandemic Influenza Plan. During the discussion, PIWG members will go through a simulated timeline based on the stages of a pandemic. A question and answer session will also take place. This will be in preparation for the March meeting/tabletop exercise.

Also during the PIWG steering committee meeting, a news story heard on National Public Radio (NPR) about the 1918 pandemic was discussed. Research indicates that bacteria may have been the cause of death for tens of millions of people around the world instead of a flu virus. The story can be found at <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=93747214>.

Lastly, Janice McCoy, Health Protection Coordinator, noted the completion of the pandemic influenza assessment survey for the state of Kansas. Copies will be distributed at the October 14 meeting.

National News:

University of Texas and Rutgers researchers have reported a discovery that could help scientists develop drugs to fight avian influenza and other influenza strains.

Researchers identified the three-dimensional structure of an influenza A virus protein that plays a central role in suppressing a person's natural defenses to infection, thus allowing the virus to spread. This NS1 virus protein is shared by all influenza A viruses, including avian influenza. A full description of these findings can be found in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS) Early Edition and will be published in an upcoming issue of the PNAS print edition.

International News:

As of June 19, 2008 there have been a total of 385 confirmed human cases and 243 confirmed deaths due to H5N1 avian influenza. The reported number of cases and deaths due to H5N1 avian influenza for 2008 is 34 and 26 respectively. None of these have occurred in the United States.

Japan's Sharp Corporation has developed an air purifier that claims to eliminate 99.9% of the H5N1 strain of avian influenza within 10 minutes. The plasmacluster ion technology, developed in 2000, disables airborne microorganisms by releasing positive and negative ions into the air. Although direct contact with infected poultry or surfaces contaminated with their feces is currently considered the main cause of human infection, researchers hope this will provide another line of defense to combat the virus. Plasmacluster ions have proven effective against 26 other kinds of harmful airborne substances, including bacteria and allergens. It can be installed in air conditioners, dehumidifiers and air purifiers for home and industrial use, although Sharp Corp. have not indicated when the latest technology might be used commercially.

Upcoming meetings/exercises: The next full PIWG meeting will be Tuesday, October 14 at 9 a.m. at the KU School of Medicine, 1010 N. Kansas, Robert's Amphitheater.

The Kansas Health Ethics 2008 Autumn Summit: October 23rd at the Wichita Marriott. For more information, visit www.kansashealthethics.org or call (316) 684-1991.

2008 Kansas All-Hazards Behavioral Health Symposium: October 24th in Salina.



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