

5 Jun 2009

## **Human infections of influenza A (H1N1):**

### **Perspective from WHO Lao P.D.R. (update 19)**

**NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE**

[www.unlao.org/H1N1/influenzah1n1.asp](http://www.unlao.org/H1N1/influenzah1n1.asp)

#### **Highlights:**

- Globally, there are 19,543 confirmed human cases of influenza A (H1N1) with 117 deaths
- H1N1 on the rise in the Western Pacific Region
- All southern Lao provinces prepare their pandemic health plans
- Are new flu strains more likely to arise in belt of tropical countries?
- **There are no known suspected or confirmed human cases of influenza A (H1N1) in Lao PDR**

#### **Current level of influenza pandemic alert**

Influenza pandemic alert remains at phase 5. Sustained community level transmission has been documented only in North America.

Following calls from a number of countries to review the pandemic alert phases being based on geographical considerations, WHO held a series of consultations on 1 June with experts across the globe to understand their concerns about a possible WHO declaration of Phase 6. These consultations were extremely fruitful. There is a consensus on the continued use of the geographical spread for phase 6. But it was agreed that it is important to add a measure of severity. WHO phases will undergo a revision to reflect disease severity as well as geographic spread. WHO will also work on a system which will help WHO Member States better calibrate their actions if Phase 6 is declared. A key component of WHO's advice will include guidance on differing levels of severity.

WHO continues to monitor the spread of H1N1. We are closer to phase 6 now than at the start of this week as numbers in various countries continue to increase.

For further clarification about pandemic phases please read:

[http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian\\_influenza/phase/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/phase/en/index.html)

#### **Global situation**

As of 6.00 GMT 4 June 2009, Geneva time, 64 countries had reported A(H1N1) cases. The total official laboratory confirmed cases were 19,543 including 117 deaths.

### Epidemiological Assessment

There is an ongoing spread and countries continue to see 3 distinct situations:

- Advanced spread in countries of North America and Mexico with a mixed pattern where cases are increasing in some locations, declining in others, and increasing again in yet other areas after having decreased there.
- Transition in some countries in Europe, Asia, South America and Australia where there are larger number of cases and early spread into the community
- • Limited cases in countries where the cases relate to travellers or communities.

Cases have been reported in Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Malaysia, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Spain, Singapore, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey, UK, Uruguay, USA and Vietnam. Deaths have been reported in Canada; Costa Rica; Mexico; and USA.

### **Western Pacific and Local Region:**

There continue to be no deaths in the Western Pacific and South East Asian regions. As of 6.00 GMT, 4 June 2009, Japan has 379 cases, Australia 633, China 92, The Republic of South Korea 41, New Zealand 10 cases, Malaysia 2, The Philippines 21, Vietnam has 3 cases and Singapore has 11 cases. Thailand has 2 confirmed cases

All states and territories in Australia, now the most affected country in the Western Pacific region, now have cases of the virus. Most of Australia's cases are in the more populous states of Victoria, which has 521, or 82%, of the country's 633 confirmed cases.

On June 3, Victoria lifted its alert status from "contain" to "modified sustain" which allows efforts to be intensively focused on those at highest risk of complications. The remainder of the country remains on "contain" phase.

There are no suspected or confirmed human cases of influenza A (H1N1) in Lao PDR.

### **What is the WHO Lao PDR country office doing?**

WHO continues to provide technical assistance to the Governments response efforts.

Ongoing support includes:

- WHO staff have been conducting Provincial Pandemic Planning training in the southern provinces this week for district and provincial health officers and clinicians. All five southern provinces will now have provincial pandemic health plans in line with the national pandemic health plan.

- Information sheets for UN staff (English/Lao) and the public (Lao) for home-based care and recommended actions to be taken during in-community transmission and non-community transmission phases have been finalized prior to distribution.

### **Swine flu attention turns to the tropics**

New flu strains are more likely to arise in equatorial countries, where influenza is present the year round and surveillance is poor.

A newly published article in the journal *Nature* says that with the influenza season over in the temperate Northern Hemisphere, and just getting under way on the other side of the world, scientists are watching the A(H1N1) swine flu virus to see where it goes next and whether it will reassort with other flu viruses, or mutate, to cause more severe disease or acquire resistance to antiviral drugs. Some researchers are warning, however, that such changes might be more likely to occur not in the northern or southern temperate zones where flu is seasonal, but in the narrow, often-overlooked belt of tropical countries where flu circulates all year round. See *Nature* **459**, 490-491 (2009) for more information.

### **Where to get more information**

During public health emergencies, it is important to seek accurate information about the situation. For official information on this evolving situation and for technical and communication guidance for health administrators, health professionals and the general public, please click on the following links:

**WHO:** <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/index.html>  
**US CDC:** [http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/?s\\_cid=swineFlu\\_outbreak\\_internal\\_001](http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/?s_cid=swineFlu_outbreak_internal_001)  
**France:** [http://www.invs.sante.fr/derniere\\_minute/default.asp](http://www.invs.sante.fr/derniere_minute/default.asp)

### **In Lao PDR:**

#### ***For the public:***

National Emerging Infectious Disease Coordination Office (NEIDCO)  
Hotline Telephone: 166  
UN Lao website: [www.unlao.org](http://www.unlao.org)

#### ***For technical queries:***

National Centre for Laboratory and Epidemiology (NCLE)  
Telephone: 021 350 209

World Health Organization - Lao PDR  
Communications Officer Cathy Williams  
Email\*: [commdiseaseinfo.lao@wpro.who.int](mailto:commdiseaseinfo.lao@wpro.who.int)  
Telephone: 020 514-1105

Office: 021 353902-4 ext 81839

***For general medical queries:***

UN Dispensary Physician & Nurse

In the first instance please email:

Ivy Caballes [ivy.caballes@undp.org](mailto:ivy.caballes@undp.org)

Ben.Burford [ben.burford@undp.org](mailto:ben.burford@undp.org)

In the second instance please call: 021 267789 or 021 267788

For after hours medical emergencies for UN staff **only** please call: 020 559 9292

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