

Influenza Update

1 June 2010

Perspective from WHO Lao PDR

Published as situation requires

Surveillance Reporting for Pandemic H1N1 2009 in Lao PDR

To conserve resources, the National Centre for Laboratory and Epidemiology (NCLE) no longer tests every suspected case of Pandemic H1N1 2009. Testing is recommended for anyone with severe respiratory disease, health care workers and in provinces that have not reported cases. In addition, surveillance in Lao PDR continues to monitor influenza-like illness at certain "sentinel" sites in the country using a system similar to many other countries world-wide.

Situation update for Lao PDR in week 21 (16-22 May) of 2010 is as follows:

- The total number of cases of respiratory disease is similar to that seen at this time in previous years. In week 21, 88 cases of Acute Respiratory Infection (ARI) were reported from 9 Provinces.
- There is currently no disruption of health care services.
- A total of 335 cases of Pandemic H1N1 2009 have now been laboratory confirmed (with 2 deaths) in 13/17 Provinces, but as individual cases are no longer being tested and samples are not collected from all provinces, the number of confirmed cases will continue to underestimate the actual number of cases in Lao PDR.
- Between April 28th 2009 and May 22nd 2010 (over the last 13 months), NCLE has confirmed 663 cases of influenza, with just over 50% of them testing positive for Pandemic H1N1 2009. The remaining cases were variations of seasonal influenza. This is a similar pattern to that seen in other developed and developing countries.

Regional Update (countries bordering Lao PDR)

Overall pandemic influenza activity remains low to sporadic, except in limited areas of south and southeast Asia, particularly Singapore, Malaysia, and Bangladesh.

Overall Pandemic Situation

While in most parts of the world Pandemic H1N1 activity is declining, the WHO Emergency Committee met on 1 June 2010 and advised it is still premature to change the pandemic status based on available evidence. WHO continues to monitor the situation closely as the typical flu season in the southern hemisphere draws closer, and increased flu activity is expected. For information about Pandemic H1N1 worldwide, please visit www.who.int.

Pandemic Vaccine for Lao PDR

WHO assisted the Government of Lao PDR to receive a donation of 660,000 doses of pandemic H1N1 vaccine from the Government of Australia. The Government's Expanded Programme on Immunization is currently providing the vaccine to citizens of Lao who are healthcare workers, pregnant women and people who have a medical condition which increases their risk for complications from the virus. To date 181,893 people have been vaccinated but several provinces are still to report and vaccination activities are ongoing. A surveillance system to detect any adverse event following immunization has been established and reports have been received from a few provinces but none of the reactions have been serious and all cases have already recovered. The government has officially requested 400,000 additional doses plus injection supplies and WHO has indicated that it will be granting this request.

Ongoing considerations

As always, it is important to wash your hands frequently to help protect yourself and others from infection. To protect the health of others further and also to help ensure a quick recovery if you become ill, please stay home until you are well recovered. Covering your coughs and sneezes will also help to protect others from the virus.

Know when it's time to see a doctor

Those who are at high risk for severe illness from Pandemic H1N1 should see a doctor if they develop any symptoms of the flu which may include a fever, cough, sore throat, headache and body aches.

Those at higher risk include:

- Pregnant women, particularly in second and third trimesters
- Persons with chronic (long-term) illnesses such as wheezing or asthmatic conditions, cardiac disease, diabetes mellitus, chronic metabolic diseases, chronic renal diseases, chronic neurological conditions
- Persons with haemoglobinopathies (genetically inherited disorders of red blood cell haemoglobin including sickle cell disease and the thalassaemias)
- Persons who are immunosuppressed (including from cancers, HIV/AIDS, certain drugs)
- Children under 5 years of age
- Persons with morbid obesity

All people who experience flu-like symptoms, should suspect H1N1. There is no need for testing, but if any of the following symptoms occur, seek medical care right away:

- Difficulty breathing
- Fever (temperature over 38°C) lasting more than 2 days
- Condition improves and then gets worse

H5N1 Avian Influenza in Vientiane Capital

The Government of Lao PDR recently responded to a small outbreak of H5N1 avian influenza in poultry in Vientiane Capital. This is a good reminder that the virus continues to circulate in the region (human cases were reported earlier this year from Vietnam and Cambodia) and that taking simple hygiene and food safety steps can help protect people from catching this virus. Wash hands frequently with soap. Eat thoroughly cooked poultry (no pink meat, no runny eggs). Avoid any contact with sick or dead poultry. Always slaughter and handle poultry safely. Report any sick or dead poultry to local authorities or call 166, the Government's reporting hotline.

Where to get more information

UN Lao website: www.unlao.org

WHO International: <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/index.html>

US CDC: http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/?s_cid=swineFlu_outbreak_internal_001

France: http://www.invs.sante.fr/derniere_minute/default.asp

For technical queries:

Contact the World Health Organization, Lao PDR, email csr.lao@wpro.who.int , phone 021 353902-4

For general medical queries from UN staff ONLY:

Contact the UN Dispensary, Ivy Caballes, email ivy.caballes@undp.org, office phone 021 267 789. *Embassy staff should contact their normal clinic.*
