



Issue number 11
May 2008

Viewpoint – Professor Lindsey Davies p1

NHS implementation team in place p2

NHS national workshop p3

GP remuneration agreement p3

Managing death certification p4

Antiviral distribution strategy p5

Social care engagement p5

International update p6

Changes to medicine legislation p7

Science update p8-9



Viewpoint

Professor Lindsey Davies, National Director of Pandemic Influenza Preparedness, introduces the latest news and highlights current developments.

Welcome to the latest issue of **Pandemic Flu News**. The past few weeks have brought with them a number of preparedness events across the country and I'm very impressed with the level of energy and commitment shown.

The Local Resilience Forum Conference on 19 May was jointly organised by the Department of Health and the Cabinet Office and reinforced the point that the value of multi-agency planning should not be underestimated. I'm very aware of how difficult this can be, but it's important to keep trying and I'm confident that the advantages of doing so will quickly become apparent.

The big news this month is that the NHS implementation team is now in place and ready to help [page 2]. Nicki Smith is the Project Manager and she has a range of initiatives in motion to

provide guidance and training to the NHS. In order for the project to succeed, it is vital that you share your experiences and examples of best practice, and there will soon be an online forum available to make the process as effective and accessible as possible.

I'm also happy to announce confirmation of a remuneration agreement between NHS Employers and GPs, to be activated in the event of a pandemic [page 3]. This has helped to clarify the role of GPs within preparedness plans and provides evidence of successful collaboration.

Some of you have asked for an update on the guidance that is in preparation. We hope to release both the first draft relating to pregnancy, and final version for mental health, in the coming month. The consultation on the sensitive topic

of managing death certification has led to the draft being revised. This revision is now available for comment [page 4].

We've recently had a very good workshop with international colleagues from a wide range of organisations [page 6] and this will inform a final strategy to be released later in the year. This was a cross-Government event and provides a useful demonstration of our overarching commitment to pandemic preparedness.

I'm looking forward to meeting some of you at the forthcoming workshop in June [page 3]. I'm aware that there has been some frustration caused by the limited number of places available but attendees will be responsible for disseminating the information to their colleagues.

In the meantime, if you have any comments or queries regarding any aspect of your planning process, please contact me at pandemicflu@dh.gsi.gov.uk

Lindsey Davies

Professor Lindsey Davies



Issue number 11
May 2008

NHS implementation team in place

Viewpoint – Professor
Lindsey Davies p1

NHS Implementation
team in place p2

NHS national
workshop p3

GP remuneration
agreement p3

Managing death
certification p4

Antiviral distribution
strategy p5

Social care
engagement p5

International
update p6

Changes to medicine
legislation p7

Science
update p8-9

At-a-glance

- new team to support planning preparedness
- training initiatives are being developed

Nicki Smith, NHS Implementation Project Manager, introduces her new team.

The NHS implementation team for pandemic flu is now in post and we are working hard to help you put preparedness into practice by December 2008. Coming from an emergency planning background in NHS London, I appreciate the challenges that lie ahead.

Over the next 12 months, my team will provide a central support function for the ongoing implementation of preparedness plans in the NHS. Our

focus is on the guidance, training, communications and assurance arrangements you need to ensure that robust plans are put in place.

One of our priorities is to improve the sharing of information. The team has developed a pandemic flu online forum that will support collaboration, enabling participants to comment on, and respond to, the information available. This site is now being piloted with SHA Flu Leads and will be available to a wider audience shortly. Contact jessica.tuzin@dh.gsi.gov.uk for further information.

The recent self-assessment process highlighted knowledge gaps within the wider NHS audience. We are working on training initiatives driven by local requests that could be used, for example, with groups of GPs or hospital clinicians. We'd like to be

able to highlight examples of local good practice and hope that the upcoming national workshop will be a great opportunity to do this. If you have any good case studies please contact hadeel.bilal@dh.gsi.gov.uk

We are in the process of enhancing the current self-assessment tool to make it easier to use and analyse in preparation for the next assessment due in the autumn. James Cooper, who is also developing a specialised mental health assessment tool, is leading this work.

We'll keep you up to date with our progress in future issues of Flu News and I look forward to meeting many of you at Church House on 23 June. In the meantime, please email me at nicki.smith@dh.gsi.gov.uk with any comments or queries about our work.



Issue number 11
May 2008

Viewpoint – Professor
Lindsey Davies p1

NHS implementation
team in place p2

NHS national
workshop p3

GP remuneration
agreement p3

Managing death
certification p4

Antiviral distribution
strategy p5

Social care
engagement p5

International
update p6

Changes to medicine
legislation p7

Science
update p8-9

NHS national workshop: 23 June

At-a-glance

- focus on plan implementation
- opportunity to learn about best practice

The fourth NHS national workshop is on Monday 23 June at Church House, Westminster.

The workshop will focus on the implementation of pandemic flu preparedness plans, with a view to meeting the requirement in the NHS operating framework for all NHS trusts to have robust plans in place by December 2008.

In line with the previous workshops, the event is targeted at those involved in planning for a pandemic at local and regional levels. Delegates will have an opportunity to discuss

progress and to share and learn from best practice and experience.

Topics for the workshop sessions will include: surge management, workforce issues, Flu Line, antiviral distribution, surveillance, pharmacy and medicines, social care and the national communications strategy.

Invitations for the workshop will be distributed by SHA Flu Leads, who will each nominate up to 30 colleagues from their region. For further information, email katie.ross@dh.gsi.gov.uk

GP remuneration agreement

At-a-glance

- GP actions in the event of a pandemic clarified
- financial arrangement agreed

The Department of Health has endorsed an agreement reached

between NHS Employers and the British Medical Association's General Practitioners Committee to ensure that GP practices are not financially disadvantaged should routine work be suspended in response to an influenza pandemic.

This is in line with the principle set out in 'Pandemic influenza: Guidance for primary care trusts and primary care professionals on the provision of healthcare in a community setting in England': 'The Department of Health does not intend any general practice to be disadvantaged financially by its participation in responding to an influenza pandemic' (section 9.3.3).

Links and Info

[Further information on the agreement](#)



Issue number 11
May 2008

Draft guidance on managing death certification

Viewpoint – Professor
Lindsey Davies p1

NHS implementation
team in place p2

NHS national
workshop p3

GP remuneration
agreement p3

Managing death
certification p4

Antiviral distribution
strategy p5

Social care
engagement p5

International
update p6

Changes to medicine
legislation p7

Science
update p8-9

At-a-glance

- revised draft guidance available for comment
- intended for medical practitioners responsible for death certification

Following the consultation on draft guidance to manage death and cremation certification in a pandemic, a revised draft is now available for comment.

Feedback on the first draft was mainly very positive and related to specific points that need clarifying. On closer inspection, it also became apparent that some fairly significant changes are required to the original proposals. The Department of Health has therefore agreed that a revised draft should be issued for further discussion with key stakeholders. The final guidance will be published this summer, as planned.

The target audience is mainly medical practitioners responsible for certifying the cause of death, although the guidance also aims to assist crematorium and burial authorities in managing their responsibility for the disposal of remains. The deadline for comments on the revised draft is 22 June.

The Home Office has now published related guidance: 'Planning For A Possible Influenza Pandemic: A Framework For Planners Preparing To Manage Deaths'. The aim of this is to assist local authorities in drawing up plans for dealing with additional deaths, including practical measures to manage the increased funeral, cremation and burial requirements.

Links and Info

[Comment on the revised draft](#)



Issue number 11
May 2008

Viewpoint – Professor Lindsey Davies p1

NHS implementation team in place p2

NHS national workshop p3

GP remuneration agreement p3

Managing death certification p4

Antiviral distribution strategy p5

Social care engagement p5

International update p6

Changes to medicine legislation p7

Science update p8-9

Antiviral distribution strategy

At-a-glance

- Flu Line development continues
- guidance on collection points in preparation

It has been a busy month involving evaluating and interviewing potential suppliers for Flu Line, the integral part of the overall antiviral distribution strategy. The successful supplier will be announced shortly.

Recent briefings with SHAs have been an opportunity to discuss and get feedback on our plans for stock management and supply. Your feedback has made it clear that detailed guidance on collection points and other points of use (such as inpatients)

is needed. This will be issued in the summer when we will also organise further regional briefings.

Social care: engagement continues

At-a-glance

- engagement with voluntary agencies at a national level
- home care providers guidance available

Participation in recent local planning events involving the NHS and social care providers has helped inform our work on the social care training pack.

They have also highlighted the fact that many local authorities and PCTs refer to working with voluntary agencies in their plans. To ensure there is a uniform approach we are

consulting with these agencies at a national level. The output of this will be to increase and share knowledge of the help voluntary agencies can provide in the event of a pandemic.

A key sector to engage with is that of home care providers. The sustainability of home, or domiciliary, care will be a vital part of the social care response to a pandemic and it is important to ensure that both carers and managers are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to enable them to continue to provide a service. The United Kingdom Home Care Association (UKHCA) has already undertaken some valuable work in this area and representatives from the pandemic flu team at the Department of Health will address the UKHCA conference in November.

Links and Info

[View pandemic flu guidance from UKHCA](#)



Issue number 11
May 2008

International update

Viewpoint – Professor
Lindsey Davies p1

NHS implementation
team in place p2

NHS national
workshop p3

GP remuneration
agreement p3

Managing death
certification p4

Antiviral distribution
strategy p5

Social care
engagement p5

International
update p6

Changes to medicine
legislation p7

Science
update p8-9

At-a-glance

- border policies under close scrutiny
- UK plays active role in the revision of WHO pandemic planning guidance

A series of recent events has helped to inform the three to five year cross-Government pandemic flu international strategy.

They include: a meeting of the Global Health Security Action Group (GHSAG), which comprises the G7 countries and Mexico; the WHO consultation on the revision of its planning guidance and a UK seminar with delegates from international organisations and leading countries.

The GHSAG meeting, hosted in Washington, examined the various border and port policies of each country. It included a simulation

exercise of WHO Phases four to six, where country representatives went through the actions they would take in various scenarios in relation to border closures, screening and expatriates, among others. The results showed an array of responses to be reported to senior Government officials later in the year. The Department of Health plans to run similar exercises within the EU.

The consultation on the revision of the WHO pandemic planning guidance stimulated energetic debate on issues such as the wording of WHO Phase definitions, use of the pandemic severity index, research needs, and non-pharmaceutical countermeasures. The core guidance is due to be completed by the end of the year and the UK is actively involved in its revision.

Finally, the UK seminar provided an excellent opportunity to

debate and inform the future UK international strategy on pandemic flu planning. Watch this space for news on the release of the final strategy later in the year.



Issue number 11
May 2008

Next steps for proposed changes to medicine legislation

Viewpoint – Professor
Lindsey Davies p1

NHS implementation
team in place p2

NHS national
workshop p3

GP remuneration
agreement p3

Managing death
certification p4

Antiviral distribution
strategy p5

Social care
engagement p5

International
update p6

Changes to medicine
legislation p7

Science
update p8-9

At-a-glance

- proposed changes received strong support
- accompanying professional guidance being developed

A Department of Health (DH) response to the consultation, 'Possible amendments to medicines and associated legislation during an influenza pandemic' has been published and the next steps agreed.

Website spring clean

In response to your feedback, the pandemic flu pages of the Department of Health's (DH's) website will shortly undergo a minor 'spring clean'. The **pandemic flu** web address stays the same and will be where you find all current information, including news and recently published guidance. Older documents, such

DH has authorised the proposed changes to be taken forward through a required technical statutory consultation with the pharmacy profession (NHS and independent contractors) and trade bodies. This will be led by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), with input from DH and the Home Office, and it is due to take place over the summer. The feedback on the proposed

amendments was overwhelmingly supportive. In response to comments DH will be developing professional guidance to accompany the suggestions.

Final draft legislative amendments and the professional guidance should be in place by the end of the year.

as early drafts of guidance, will be available via the publications section of the main DH website. The new structure will make it easier to see and access priority items.

Scientific committee at work

The Scientific Pandemic Influenza Advisory Committee (SPI) had its first meeting in April. Among

items discussed were the clinical and scientific factors influencing neuraminidase inhibitor stockpiling decisions. A public statement from SPI on these factors is being developed. All the submissions, and minutes from the meeting, are available at <http://www.advisorybodies.doh.gov.uk/spi/index.htm>



Issue number 11
May 2008

Science update

Page 1 of 2 →

Viewpoint – Professor
Lindsey Davies p1

NHS implementation
team in place p2

NHS national
workshop p3

GP remuneration
agreement p3

Managing death
certification p4

Antiviral distribution
strategy p5

Social care
engagement p5

International
update p6

Changes to medicine
legislation p7

Science
update p8-9

Mass critical care

Five articles from an American and Canadian mass critical care summit were published in the May issue supplement of the journal Chest. The articles include an executive summary and individual papers on current capabilities, a framework to optimise surge capacity, medical resource guidance, and recommendations for allocating scarce critical care resources in a mass critical care setting. These articles are an important contribution to pandemic preparedness.

Links and Info

[View the articles](#)

Properties of Tamiflu-resistant influenza virus

Researchers have demonstrated that certain mutations responsible for making the influenza A (H5N1)

influenza virus resistant to the antiviral drug oseltamivir (Tamiflu) leave it susceptible to zanamivir (Relenza). The authors state that these findings mean that it would be prudent for pandemic stockpiles of oseltamivir to be augmented by additional antiviral drugs, including zanamivir. This coincides with scientific advice independently obtained, and currently being acted upon, by the Department of Health (DH). DH is also considering how much of the extended stockpile should consist of a second antiviral.

Collins PJ, Haire LF, Lin YP, et al. Crystal structures of oseltamivir-resistant influenza virus neuraminidase mutants. Nature 2008 (online publication 14 May).

Links and Info

[View abstract](#)

Rapid production of human monoclonal antibodies against influenza virus

Researchers have developed a new method to rapidly produce human monoclonal antibodies specific to seasonal influenza. The process uses blood from volunteers, who have received a seasonal influenza vaccine, to produce antibodies in about a month, rather than the typical two to three months. The researchers plan to use this technique to generate monoclonal antibodies against the influenza A (H5N1) virus and other pathogens.

Wrammert J et al. Rapid cloning of high-affinity human monoclonal antibodies against influenza virus [10.1038/nature06890] 2008; ISSN: 0028-0836.

Links and Info

[View abstract](#)



Issue number 11
May 2008

Science update

← Page 2 of 2

Viewpoint – Professor
Lindsey Davies p1

NHS implementation
team in place p2

NHS national
workshop p3

GP remuneration
agreement p3

Managing death
certification p4

Antiviral distribution
strategy p5

Social care
engagement p5

International
update p6

Changes to medicine
legislation p7

Science
update p8-9

The global circulation of seasonal influenza A (H3N2) viruses

Research has found that new strains of influenza A (H3N2) viruses have originated in East and South East Asia each year since 2002. These have spread around the world and when they leave East and South East Asia they rarely return, making regions outside of these areas essentially the evolutionary graveyards of influenza viruses. This may help to improve seasonal flu vaccines, although the relevance of this finding for the origin of pandemic viruses is unclear.

Russell C A et al. The global circulation of seasonal influenza A (H3N2) viruses. *Science* 2008 18 April; 320(5874):340-6.

Links and Info
[View abstract](#)

Transmission of avian influenza virus to dogs

This article provides a reminder that H5N1 is not the only avian influenza virus that can infect mammals. South Korea researchers isolated three canine strains (all H3N2) from dogs exhibiting severe respiratory disease. They infected beagles with this influenza virus (H3N2) isolate which led to clinical illness and demonstrated the capability of these viruses to transmit between dogs. Transmission of avian influenza A virus to a new mammalian species is of concern because the host could act as a 'mixing vessel' and generate new viruses that might more easily infect other species, including humans.

Song D et al. Transmission of Avian Influenza Virus (H3N2) to Dogs. *Emerg Infect Dis.* 2008 May; 14(5):741-6.

Links and Info
[View article](#)

Vaccination rates among healthcare workers

US researchers have evaluated methods to improve vaccination rates among healthcare workers. Rates do not increase with information on vaccination importance or the offer of a raffle ticket for a free holiday.

Shirin Doratotaj, Michael L Macknin and Sarah Worley. A novel approach to improve influenza vaccination rates among health care professionals: A prospective randomized controlled trial. *Mosby;* 2008 May 1; 36, (4): 301-303.

Links and Info
[View article](#)