



September 21, 2009

Subject: Information/letter to faculty

From: Don Holsinger, M.D., Medical Director, PSU Student Health Services

The H1N1 Influenza A virus has received a lot of media coverage and has increased our level of awareness of infectious diseases. This communication is an attempt to assist the faculty in establishing policies that will enable the student to accomplish their academic goals and yet protect the health of the students, staff and faculty.

Following are same facts that might be helpful:

- H1N1 is a new strain of influenza A virus being seen internationally. Because it is a new strain, humans have no immunity pending availability of the new vaccine.
- Even though H1N1 is being seen in all ages, the largest numbers of people infected are under age 25. Kansas is reporting the median age of 16 yrs with 54% occurring in ages 5-24 yrs.
- Viral activity has been confirmed in 55 of the 105 counties of Kansas, including most S.E. Kansas counties. It is estimated that over 10,000 people in Kansas have been infected with 2 deaths having the virus. Since influenza is not a mandated reportable disease, such as meningococcal meningitis, the numbers are probably underestimated. The state public health laboratory now only accepts specimens for H1N1 virus studies from hospitalized patients or random specimens from sentinel collection points. Therefore, we are not able to accurately determine the incidence of H1N1 of our student population.
- The incubation period (time of exposure until onset of disease) is 1-7 days.
- Flu viruses are almost always spread from person to person by droplets that are coughed or sneezed into the air. They can also be spread by the hands of an infected person who has touched their mouth or nose. Viral particles have also been recovered from objects up to 8 hours after a cough or sneeze and can travel a distance of 6 feet.
- Symptoms of seasonal flu and H1N1 flu virus are essentially the same; chills, fever (often 101 to 103 degrees F.), headaches, general muscle aches, sore throat, runny nose, cough fatigue and occasional vomiting and diarrhea. Typical cases have symptoms for 3-7 days but may last up to 14 days with more severe illness. Patients with associated chronic medical conditions have greater risk of serious illness.
- The infectivity period of the illness has not been clearly defined. The CDC has stated that the infected individual is probably capable of transmitting the virus from 24 hrs before the onset of symptoms to at least 24 hrs. after the fever (100 degrees F.) has subsided. New studies suggest that the virus can still be transmitted days later when a lingering cough persists.
- The CDC does not recommend the use of anti-viral medication for otherwise healthy individuals and there is no prophylactic medication recommended. Self isolation and symptomatic measures are prescribed by our student health services consistent with the CDC guidelines. Notification of exposure is not necessary according to the CDC but during close classroom contact all individual should follow precautionary measures to prevent spread of the viruses.
- The H1N1 virus is expected to recur in waves throughout the year compared to the seasonal flu which usually will last for a 6-8 wk. period.

The student health service is always available for consultation with the faculty or staff regarding any specific health issues. We also encourage faculty to observe the well being of their students and to refer any student to us that may be displaying signs of an influenza-like illness.