

# Avian Influenza and Pandemic Planning

Update 4  
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This issue includes information on the work to secure a guaranteed supply of antibiotics in the event of an influenza pandemic. There are details on the DHB Emergency Planners Workshop and Māori Focus Group meeting. TV advertising on how to prepare for an influenza pandemic also began this month.

## International situation

As at December 21 there have been 139 confirmed cases of H5N1 in humans, with 71 deaths, since 26 December 2003. Vietnam continues to report the highest number of cases. The cumulative number of confirmed human cases reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) since December 2003 can be found at:

[http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian\\_influenza/country/cases\\_table\\_2005\\_12\\_16/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/country/cases_table_2005_12_16/en/index.html)

Infection in birds has spread through many parts of Asia into Europe. No human cases have yet been reported in Europe. A global update can be found at [www.oie.int/download/AVIAN INFLUENZA/A\\_AI-Asia.htm](http://www.oie.int/download/AVIAN_INFLUENZA/A_AI-Asia.htm)

## New Zealand situation

### PHARMAC

The Minister of Health, the Hon Pete Hodgson has announced work is underway to secure an additional supply of antibiotics in the event of an influenza pandemic. PHARMAC has contacted pharmaceutical suppliers to request proposals for the antibiotic supply effort. Due to the uncertainty involved in the planning process, PHARMAC is seeking proposals that address a number of possible scenarios. One important issue to address is the possibility that antibiotic supplies may expire before they are needed. PHARMAC is also asking suppliers to address how antibiotics could be packaged for easy distribution given the likely pressures the health workforce would face during a pandemic.

### District Health Boards

The Ministry held a DHB Emergency Planners Workshop on 15 December 2005 in Wellington. The workshop was an opportunity for the Ministry to update DHBs on the work that it has undertaken on pandemic planning, to answer questions and gather feedback on pandemic planning from DHBs and to further strengthen the coordinated approach to pandemic planning.

DHBs submitted their preliminary Pandemic Plans to the Ministry of Health a few months ago. The Director General of Health has sent a letter to DHBs' Chief Executives outlining a planning activity framework for DHBs' pandemic planning. The framework is based on the World Health Organisation's 'Checklist for Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Planning' and The Australia/New Zealand Risk Management Standard.

## Advisory Groups

The Pandemic Influenza Technical Advisory Group (PITAG) met for the sixth time on 15 December 2005.

## Clinical Pathways Planning

A Ministry of Health convened meeting, chaired by Dr David Galler, was held in Wellington on 29 November 2005, to discuss clinical pathways planning for a possible influenza pandemic. The meeting included Ministry representatives, and a small group of specialists in emergency medicine, infectious diseases, intensive care and intensive care nursing, and general practitioners from around the country.

Topics discussed include:

- the limited role of hospital based services in a full blown pandemic
- ethical issues about when and how to provide care to people in a possible pandemic situation
- the importance of pandemic-related, up-to-date information and education in infection control measures
- providing primary and secondary care staff with consistent factual information to maintain their trust

## Māori Focus Group

A Māori clinical practice focus group of health and disability sector experts, including District Health Board Māori managers, met this week with the Ministry to discuss pandemic planning. The seven-strong group identified key issues for Māori that will need to be addressed, to allow whānau to support whānau in the event of a pandemic. Discussion topics will feed into ongoing work.

## What's new on the web?

The Ministry continues to update material on the pandemic influenza webpages as it become available. Recent updates include: travel advice and Roche's decision to suspend public sales of Tamiflu until May 2006.

In November [www.moh.govt.nz/pandemicinfluenza](http://www.moh.govt.nz/pandemicinfluenza) and [www.moh.govt.nz/birdflu](http://www.moh.govt.nz/birdflu) were the second and third most visited pages with 14,084 and 6,256 visits respectively.

64.84 % of hits to the Ministry's website [www.moh.govt.nz](http://www.moh.govt.nz) were from overseas, 34.32% from New Zealand. (0.84% are visits of unknown origin)

## 0800 AVN FLU (0800 286 358)

From the end of October 2005, when the 0800 number became operational, until December 13 2005, a total of 465 calls were logged. The freephone, pre-recorded line gives callers four options for further information. They are: Preparing for a Pandemic, Protecting Yourself in a Pandemic, Tamiflu and Travel Advice.

## Ministry of Health workstream updates

### Information for primary care

The Ministry has mailed out posters and brochures, for 10,000 kits for primary care practitioners including GPs, primary health care nurses, and pharmacies. The material includes a pandemic planning guide for practices, travel health advice, best prevention practice, infection control, and information on tamiflu and vaccines. Updated PDFs have also been put on the website.

## **Community Based Assessment Centres (CBACs)**

A working group representing a variety of groups including GPs, Medical Officers of Health, practice nurses and emergency planners has developed the first draft document on the role and function of community based assessment centres in a pandemic. It is interim advice, and will be updated in early 2006 following sector comment.

## **Communications work**

The Ministry is promoting generic pandemic influenza messages on TV. It started on Tuesday 13 December 2005 and will run through to Friday 23 December 2005. The key messages are in line with our communications focus on informing New Zealanders about the importance of planning for an influenza pandemic, and how to protect yourself at home.

In addition, two two-minute videos are in production now, and planned to be on the Ministry's website, and available for further distribution from the end of January 2006. The messages are how to prepare for and what to do in an influenza pandemic. We will continue to update you on this.

Radio New Zealand is to make a series of Public Service Broadcasting trailers advising people on how to prepare for an influenza pandemic. They are due to be aired mid January 2006 to mid February. Radio Live, Access Radio and Niu FM have agreed to play them and they will also be sent to 22 iwi stations. Other access and community stations are also being contacted. We are also investigating similar trailers in Maori.

Three omnibus surveys with questions on pandemic influenza will start in January 06. Questions address public awareness and preparedness. We already have some polling from November showing 80% of people were aware of/ had very high awareness of pandemic influenza.

Work continues on developing a full-colour, illustrated public information brochure, based on the electronic factsheet '*Getting Ready for a Pandemic*', as well as a full-colour A3-sized poster. Pre-testing has been completed, with the overall results very positive. Pre-test participants were particularly keen on the proposed complementary styles of the brochure and poster. It is anticipated that the resources will be completed before Christmas, for distribution in the New Year.

## **International co-ordination**

The Ministry continues to liaise internationally. Senior Advisor Public Health Medicine, Dr Andrea Forde attended the WHO Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network meeting in Singapore from the 6 - 9 December 2005. The meeting of the steering committee was linked to a special meeting with technical partners in the Asia/Pacific.

On the agenda of the special meeting were the following items:

- increasing the regional capacity and capability to respond to outbreaks
- the implementation of the International Health Regulations
- Avian influenza in the Asia-Pacific region.