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GOVERNOR OF HAWAII

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August 3, 2009

MEDICAL ADVISORY: Focused Influenza Testing and Update to Isolation Recommendation

Dear Hawai'i Healthcare Provider,

Given the wide circulation of novel influenza A (H1N1), the Hawai'i Department of Health (HDOH) is focusing surveillance and investigation activities to best detect changes in the character of novel H1N1 infection and monitor the distribution of influenza viruses in our state. Therefore, HDOH will be reserving novel H1N1 subtyping at the State Laboratories Division (SLD) for specimens from our Sentinel Provider Network and those cases investigated by HDOH. Clinicians are encouraged to submit specimens only from patients in priority groups[1] and notify HDOH for severely ill (hospitalized) patients by calling the appropriate number listed at the end of this advisory.

With the majority of influenza positive specimens now likely to be novel H1N1, interim management of patients with influenza-like illness (ILI)[2] should not depend on diagnostic testing, but instead on risk factors and illness severity. If testing is pursued, clinicians should be aware that rapid influenza tests do not exclude influenza infection. Based on statewide commercial laboratory testing data from June 15–July 01, 2009, for 460 influenza A RT-PCR-positive specimens that had an associated rapid test result, 293 (64%) were rapid test negative while only 167 (36%) were positive. Influenza typing (to determine A vs. B vs. negative) by RT-PCR is available at all Hawai'i commercial laboratories. Subtyping, especially for novel H1N1, while only available at SLD for select specimens, may be available to clinicians at cost from Quest/Focus Diagnostics on the mainland through their commercial laboratories. However, HDOH reiterates that interim management should not depend on subtyping results.

Based on current local and national epidemiological data, HDOH is also updating the recommended period of isolation for non-healthcare worker persons with ILI.

Recommended Measures to Reduce Influenza Transmission

For all patients who fulfill ILI criteria, the following is advised:

- **If a healthcare worker with direct patient contact,** he/she should **remain at home** from work and other activities outside their home **for 7 days or 24 hours post fever resolution without antipyretics**, whichever is longer, regardless of antiviral treatment.[3]
- **For all others,** patients should be advised to **remain at home** from work, school, and other activities outside their home **for at least 24 hours post fever resolution without antipyretics**,[4] regardless of antiviral treatment.
- Frequent hand washing or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizing gel
- Covering their nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing

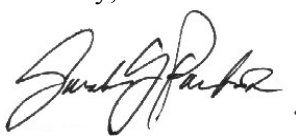
[1] Persons who fulfill ILI definition and are in at least one of the following categories: severely ill and require hospitalization; are part of a HDOH disease outbreak investigation; have history of travel outside the United States in the 10 days preceding illness onset; work in high risk occupations, e.g. health care workers engaged in direct patient care; potentially at high risk for complications.
[2] Fever ≥ 100 °F [37.8 °C] AND cough or sore throat in the absence of another known etiology.
[3] There are little and conflicting data to support otherwise; time period may be shortened only if proven negative for influenza by RT-PCR or an etiology other than influenza is laboratory confirmed.
[4] For some, this period may be 3-5 days. Viral shedding may still occur for some time after this period; however, based on current epidemiological data, maximal shedding is thought to occur during the febrile period with most secondary transmission also occurring during that period. Infection prevention measures should be strongly encouraged in patients returning to work or school.

If you have questions about or need to report a suspect case that meets priority criteria, please contact HDOH at the numbers below:

O‘ahu (Disease Investigation Branch) ..... (808) 586-4586
Maui District Health Office ..... (808) 984-8213
Kaua‘i District Health Office..... (808) 241-3563
Big Island District Health Office (Hilo) ..... (808) 933-0912
Big Island District Health Office (Kona)..... (808) 322-4877
After hours on O‘ahu ..... (808) 566-5049
After hours on neighbor islands..... 1(800) 360-2575 (toll free)

We appreciate the partnership of the medical community in protecting the health of the people of Hawai‘i against all influenza infections.

Sincerely,



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