



Influenza Activity Spotlight

2012–2013 Season

Issue #23 — July 11, 2013

Reminders:

- Summit calls are scheduled weekly every Thursday at 3 p.m. ET, unless cancelled. Please email [L.J Tan](#) or [LaDora Woods](#) if you have any updates on activities to provide to the Summit.
- Summit meeting materials (including the final agenda and most presentations) may be accessed [here](#).

1. National Influenza Vaccine Summit Call

The Summit call for July 11, 2013 was cancelled.

- 2. The CDC/Influenza Division Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report** for week 26 (ending June 29, 2013) is available [here](#). This represents the final *FluView* for the 2012–2013 influenza season. (Note: As part of summer reporting, an abbreviated version of *FluView* will be available each week.) According to the final full *FluView* for 2012–2013 season, U.S influenza is at summertime levels in most of the country. However sporadic activity can occur year-round, and vaccination is still recommended for institutional outbreak control; children needing their second dose; and some travelers going to the Southern Hemisphere, which soon will enter its influenza season. Compared to most previous seasons for which surveillance data are available, the [2012–2013 influenza season](#) started about 4 weeks early and was intense. An Influenza [Summary Update](#) of the influenza activity reported by state and territorial epidemiologists indicates the geographic spread of influenza viruses, but does not measure the intensity of influenza activity. Archives of previous *FluViews* are available [here](#).

3. Update on H3N2v

On June 28 CDC released [Key Points](#) regarding recent human infections with influenza H3N2 variant (H3N2v) in the United States. CDC also has posted a [web spotlight](#) summarizing this situation and the agency's recommendations.

4. More Information from CDC

On June 20 CDC issued a Health Alert Network (HAN) [Advisory #351](#) regarding H3N2v. (Note: This supersedes the H3N2v-related HAN Health [Advisory #325](#), which was issued August 3, 2012.)

The recommendations (*including hyperlinks*) from the new HAN Advisory are shown below:

Recommendations for Health Care Providers and Public Health Practitioners

- Clinicians who suspect influenza in persons with recent exposure to swine should obtain a nasopharyngeal swab or aspirate from the patient, place the swab or aspirate in viral transport medium, and contact their state or local health department to arrange transport and request a timely diagnosis at a state public health laboratory.
- Commercially available rapid influenza diagnostic tests (RIDTs) may not detect H3N2v virus in respiratory specimens. Therefore, a negative rapid influenza diagnostic test result does not exclude infection with H3N2v or any influenza virus. In addition, a positive test result for influenza A cannot confirm H3N2v virus infection, because these tests cannot distinguish between influenza A virus subtypes (i.e., they do not differentiate between other human influenza A viruses and H3N2v virus). Therefore, respiratory specimens should be collected and sent for sub-type specific real-time polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) testing at a state public health laboratory.
- Enhanced surveillance for influenza during agricultural fair season is recommended to facilitate timely detection and investigation of H3N2v cases. Recommendations for influenza surveillance and testing can be found [here](#).
- Clinicians should consider antiviral treatment with oral oseltamivir or inhaled zanamivir in patients with suspected or confirmed H3N2v virus infection. Antiviral treatment is most effective when started as soon as possible after influenza illness onset. For more information on antiviral treatment for H3N2v virus infections, please look [here](#).

Recommendations for the Public

- Persons who are at high risk for influenza complications² should avoid exposure to pigs and swine barns at fairs this year.
- Persons engaging in activities that may involve swine contact at fairs should wash their hands frequently with soap and running water before and after exposure to animals; avoid eating or drinking in animal areas; and avoid close contact with animals that look or act ill. For additional information, please see the [factsheet](#).
- Patients with influenza-like illness who are at high risk for influenza complications² should see their health care provider promptly to determine if treatment with antiviral medications is warranted.
- Patients who experience influenza-like symptoms following direct or close contact with pigs and who seek medical care should inform their health care provider about the exposure.
- Influenza viruses have not been shown to be transmissible to people through eating properly handled and prepared pork or other products derived from pigs. For more information about the proper handling and preparation of pork, visit the USDA website fact sheet "[Fresh Pork from Farm to Table](#)".

For more information:

- [Interim Guidance on Case Definitions to be Used for Investigations of Influenza A \(H3N2\) Variant Virus Cases](#) (for state and local health departments)
- [Strategies for Seasonal and Influenza A\(H3N2\)v in Health Care Settings](#)
- [Interim Guidance on Specimen Collection, Processing and Testing for Patients with Suspected Influenza A \(H3N2\) Variant Virus Infection](#) (for public health professionals)
- [Interim Guidance for Enhanced Influenza Surveillance: Additional Specimen Collection for Detection of Influenza A \(H3N2\) Variant Infections](#) (for state and local health departments)
- [Measures to Minimize Influenza Transmission at Swine Exhibitions, 2013](#)

- [Compendium of Measures to Prevent Disease Associated with Animals in Public Settings, 2011](#)

¹ Influenza viruses that circulate in swine are called swine influenza viruses when isolated from swine, but are called variant viruses when isolated from humans.

² This includes persons with certain underlying chronic medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease, or neurological conditions, pregnant women, and persons younger than 5 years, older than 65 years of age, or who have weakened immune systems. For additional information on persons at increased risk for influenza complications, please see [here](#).

5. Medicaid Expansion States to Cover ACIP-Recommended Vaccines under ACA

On July 5, 2013, CMS released the final [Medicaid Essential Health Benefits \(EHB\) rule](#). CMS clarifies that Medicaid Alternative Benefit Plans (ABPs) for the expansion population must cover the full range of preventive services required in the EHB package, including ACIP-recommended vaccines, with no cost-sharing. ***The relevant discussion begins on page 237 of the rule and is excerpted below.*** This is great news for vaccines!

Preventive Services as an EHB

The EHB Final rule specified that, to provide EHB, a plan must provide coverage of preventive services. This requires plans to cover a broad range of preventive services including “A” or “B” services recommended by the United States Preventive Services Task Force; Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices recommended vaccines; preventive care and screening of infants, children and adults recommended by HRSA’s Bright Futures program, and additional preventive services for women recommended by the Institute of Medicine. We proposed that Title XIX premium and cost sharing provisions apply to preventive services for adults, but not for children.

Comment: Many commenters commended HHS for including in ABPs the full range of preventive services required in the EHB, including all of the services specified in section 2713 of the PHS Act. The commenters believed this is a critical provision for vulnerable populations and will help achieve the Affordable Care Act objective of shifting health care emphasis from expensive interventions to cost-effective prevention. The commenters requested that HHS explicitly state this requirement (currently in the preamble at 78 FR 4631) in the regulation itself.

Response: The language in the preamble to the proposed rule, originating in section 2713 of the PHS Act, was included as a reference to the requirement to cover preventive services as part of providing EHB, which has been implemented by regulation codified at 45 CFR 147.130. We do not believe this requires further clarification in this final rule.

Comment: A number of commenters asked CMS to clarify its preamble language, “Title XIX premium and cost sharing provisions apply to preventive services.” Specifically, CMS should clarify whether it intends this to apply to the ABPs for the new expansion population and/or to current state Medicaid plan services.

Response: We agree that this issue needs to be clarified, particularly in light of the issuance of the final rules implementing EHB requirements for the individual and small group markets. In the final regulations issued February 25, 2013 at 78 FR 12835, the provision of EHB was defined at 45 CFR 156.115(a)(4) to “include preventive health services described in [45 CFR] §147.130”. That cross referenced provision describes the requirement for coverage of preventive services without cost sharing. As explained in the preamble to the proposed regulations, at 77 FR 70644, 70651 (Nov. 26, 2012), the intent was to include in the EHB coverage obligation the prohibition on cost sharing for preventive health services. Thus, while Medicaid cost sharing provisions at sections 1916 and 1916A of the Act apply generally to preventive services provided in ABPs, cost sharing may not be applied to preventive services that are within the definition of EHBs (described in 45 CFR 147.130). An ABP

may include preventive services beyond the floor of coverage required as EHBs, and cost sharing may be applied to such preventive services at state option to the extent permissible under sections 1916 and 1916A of the Act.

6. Influenza-Related Media Reports *(focus on July 9-10)*

[CDC Warns Physicians about New H3N2v Infections, Offers Updated Resources](#) (AAFP News Now)

The CDC is warning physicians and consumers that the first cases of influenza A variant (H3N2v) virus infection for 2013 were reported during the week of June 24. According to the agency, the reported cases were associated with exposure to ...

[New Discovery Made in Fight Against the Influenza Virus](#) (Vaccine News Daily)

For the first time ever researchers have mapped how molecules regulate both the beginning and end of inflammation during a flu infection, which gives insight into how to prepare for the seasonal evolution of the virus. The study was conducted by ...

[GenScript Aids Novavax's H7N9 Vaccine Development](#) (Vaccine News Daily)

GenScript announced on Monday that it has aided Novavax, Inc., in the development of a H7N9 avian influenza vaccine candidate by providing Rush Gene Services. GenScript's Rush Gene Service is capable of synthesizing gene sequences in as little as ...

[CDC Doctor Explains Rise in Flu, Other Viruses](#) (Windsor Star)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Dr. Joe Bresee, Chief Public Health Officer-Influenza Division, discusses the reasons and prevention methods of the recent rise in the confluence of influenza, whooping cough, and norovirus. (Jan. 10) ...

[Seasonal Influenza Vaccine Market in Asia-Pacific to 2018](#) (Wall Street Journal - press release)

Research and Markets has announced the addition of the "Seasonal Influenza Vaccine Market in Asia-Pacific to 2018 - Positive Impact of Government Support Offset by Limited Production ...

[Inovio Pharmaceuticals' H7N9 Vaccine Protects 100 Percent of Animals in Study](#) (Vaccine News Daily)

Inovio Pharmaceuticals, Inc., a Blue Bell, Pennsylvania-based vaccine developer, announced on Monday that its H7N9 influenza DNA vaccine protected 100 percent of vaccinated animals against sickness and death in a preclinical study. Inovio researchers ...

[McMaster University Researchers Identify Three Factors that Influence Pandemic ...](#) (News-Medical.net)

Three waves of the deadliest influenza pandemic in history, known as the Spanish flu, hit England and Wales in 1918, just as World War 1 was coming to an end. Why flu arrives in multiple waves like this is the focus of a study by McMaster University ...

[Spring Conception Ups Risk of Preterm Birth](#) (Fox News)

"Because influenza is known to cause premature labor, these infants are at higher risk of short gestation," the researchers write in the July 8 issue of the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. In fact, there was a strong link in ...

[H7N9 Influenza: History of Similar Viruses Gives Cause for Concern](#) (RedOrbit)

Although this previously unrecognized strain of avian influenza A has now been associated with 132 confirmed human infections and 39 related deaths (as of June 14), the rate at which new cases are recognized has dwindled in recent weeks.

CDC Influenza Kit Achieves FDA Clearance (Vaccine News Daily)

Quanta BioSciences, Inc., announced on Monday that its CDC Human Influenza Virus Real-Time RT-PCR Diagnostic Panel Kit has received FDA clearance. The announcement of FDA clearance comes after the CDC kit was granted emergency use ...

Behavior Change May Have the Greatest Influence on Waves of Influenza ... (Science Codex)

Hamilton, ON (July 9, 2013) - Three waves of the deadliest influenza pandemic in history, known as the Spanish flu, hit England and Wales in 1918, just as World War 1 was coming to an end. Why flu arrives in multiple waves like this is the focus of a ...

NIH Scientists Assess History, Pandemic Potential of H7 Influenza Viruses (eNews Park Forest)

Bethesda, Maryland--(ENEWSPPF)--July 9, 2013. The emergence of a novel H7N9 avian influenza virus in humans in China has raised questions about its pandemic potential as well as that of related influenza viruses. In a commentary published online today, ...

H7N9 Influenza: History of Similar Viruses Gives Cause for Concern (Infection Control Today)

The H7N9 avian flu strain that emerged in China earlier this year has subsided for now, but it would be a mistake to be reassured by this apparent lull in infections. The virus has several highly unusual traits that paint a disquieting picture of a ...

Influenza H7N9 as Viewed Through an Electron Microscope (Credit: CDC) (Discover Magazine Blog)

The devil is in the details when it comes to predicting the next viral killer . As a candidate for the next virus most likely to cause a pandemic, influenza virus H7N9 has gotten attention. Earlier this year, the previously unknown avian virus emerged ...

Could H7N9 Bird Flu Bounce Back? 3 Reasons from Leading Influenza Experts ... (Medical Daily)

In more than one way, H7N9 influenza seriously caught public health experts by surprise. When the virus struck China earlier this year, it became the first flu strain from birds to stably infect humans since the 1918 Spanish influenza strain, which ...

Indiana Health Department Reports 12 Swine Flu Cases (Vaccine News Daily)

The Indiana State Department of Health reported 12 recent cases of variant influenza A, also known as swine influenza, and urged Hoosiers on Wednesday to take steps to protect themselves at county fairs. The health department said that at ...

7. Don't Forget to Update and Submit to the New Adult Vaccine Locator!

The new Adult Vaccine Finder is now available! Please forward the following information to immunization providers with whom you work!

Attention Immunization Providers: If you are interested in letting the public know about vaccines offered at your practice or clinic, go to <http://vaccine.healthmap.org>. This site already includes more than 54,000 locations that provide flu shots and has provided this information to 500,000 users from the general public. On January 28, 2013, the site expanded to include 10 additional adult vaccines. If you want to register your location on this website, click on the "about" button on the top right hand side and follow the prompts to register, or go to <https://flushot.healthmap.org/admin/signup>.

8. Summit Website Offers Wonderful Resources on Influenza Vaccination!

Remember to visit the Summit [website](#) for the latest on influenza immunization resources and to view archived copies of the weekly updates.