
MEMORANDUM

TO: BSD HIGHER EDUCATION PRACTICE
FROM: ELIZABETH FRANCY DEMARET, MANAGING DIRECTOR,
INTERNATIONAL SERVICES
LETA FINCH, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, HIGHER EDUCATION PRACTICE
SUBJECT: SWINE FLU UPDATE AND ADVISORY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION
DATE: 27 APRIL 2009
CC: JOHN MCLAUGHLIN, JOHN WATSON

The Immediate Concern

In the past 72 hours, the United States' government has declared a health emergency as a result of the Swine Influenza virus circulating in the U.S. and Mexico.

The Director-General of the World Health Organization, Dr. Margaret Chan, convened a meeting yesterday, April 26, of the *Emergency Committee* to assess the situation. The Committee members identified knowledge gaps about the clinical features, epidemiology, and virology of reported cases, but agreed that the current situation constitutes a public health emergency of international concern.

The Director-General is recommending, on the advice of the Committee, that all countries intensify surveillance for unusual outbreaks of influenza-like illness and severe pneumonia. As of this afternoon, the World Health Organization has raised its pandemic alert for swine flu by one level to Phase 4, two steps short of declaring a full-blown pandemic.

WHO says the phase 4 alert means sustained human-to-human transmission is causing outbreaks in at least one country. It signals a significant increase in the risk of a global epidemic, but doesn't mean a pandemic is inevitable. The group also agreed to focus on mitigating the effects of the outbreak instead of trying to contain it. "This virus is too widespread to make containment a feasible operation," Fukuda said.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has stated that this is a rapidly evolving situation and it will provide new information as it becomes available.

Experts do not yet know how this particular flu strain developed. The genetic makeup shows parts of human flu, avian (bird) flu and swine (pig) flu.

Current confirmed cases and information is as follows:

— Deaths: 149 suspected, all in Mexico.

— Sickened: Nearly 2,000 in Mexico, suspected or confirmed; 40 confirmed in U.S. including, 28 at one school; 13 suspected in New Zealand; 6 confirmed in Canada; 7 suspected in Spain; 1 suspected in France; 1 suspected in Israel.

— Locations in Mexico: 17 states, including Mexico City, Mexico State, Veracruz, Oaxaca, Baja California and San Luis Potosi. Some, including Oaxaca, Mexico City and Baja California, have tourist areas, but authorities have not said where in these states the outbreaks occurred.

— Locations in U.S.: California, Kansas, New York, Ohio and Texas.

Is This A Pandemic?

The International Society of Infectious Diseases has reported that no one knows where we are in the epidemic and whether it will plateau in a few weeks or become a pandemic. Two concerns of the Society:

- The circulating swine flu virus is an H1N1 virus and it was a H1N1 virus that sparked the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic and;
- Although we are nearing the end of the influenza season, the Spanish Flu was detected in the spring, went quiet over the summer and became virulent in the fall.

Should Work or Study Travel to Mexico be Cancelled?

As of today, there are no mandatory travel restrictions by any government or governmental agencies.

The World Health Organization **is not advising any restriction on travel.**

Although the current U.S. State Department Travel Advisory for Mexico is specific to crime and violence, in particular in and around the border cities; it does NOT recommend that people avoid travel to Mexico at this time because of the Swine Flu outbreak and, instead, suggests precautions travelers and U.S. citizen residents in Mexico can take to reduce their risk of infection.

On the other hand, according to International SOS, people should consider deferring non-essential travel to Mexico City and other affected areas in Mexico for 48 hours, or until further information on the extent and severity of the illness is available.

The decision to travel to or remain in a Swine Flu impacted area remains a personal one.

For those travelers already in Mexico, the Government of Mexico announced that, as a precautionary measure, all schools from kindergarten through university level will remain closed until May 6 in the

Federal District, State of Mexico; and San Luis Potosi. All government-sponsored events involving large crowds have also been canceled, and museums and most tourist attractions are closed.

For those travelers ready to depart for Mexico in the coming weeks, all government websites are updated daily and should be monitored closely. All travelers should be given additional safety orientations to ensure that they understand all necessary precautions.

Travelers should be made aware that if mandated travel restrictions are implemented, these would restrict movement into and out of the affected area / country.

All U.S. Embassies in Mexico are on Emergency Status meaning that no Visa work or non-essential work will be carried out. They will work with only U.S. Citizens.

If travelers are already in Mexico

If a traveler is already in Mexico, the Department of Consular Affairs – Mexican Desk – made the following recommendations:

- If the traveler has not done so, they should register at www.travel.state.gov. They can do



this by clicking on this box at the top of the web site:

Travelers who register can receive updated bulletins, warden messages and other vital information. Additionally, they can provide the Consulate with their contact information, emergency contacts, etc. which will assist in communications for the Consulate if the situation deteriorates.

- If the traveler is NOT infected, then they should remain where they are if at all possible and follow the precautions recommended by the CDC.
- If the traveler wants to leave the country, they should be aware that Mexico City is the most impacted area at this point. By traveling through Mexico City, they will be exposing themselves to further infection possibilities and should take necessary precautions. Additionally, they will be screened by airport personnel and should not attempt to fly if they believe they are sick.
- If the traveler becomes sick, the Consular offices will give them a list of hospitals and clinics, but they will not be able to make recommendations of one over the other as they are not qualified.

Travel Planning

If travel can not be avoided, then the following precautions and planning are recommended. From the CDC's Travelers' Health Website:

- Antiviral Medications: Travelers from the U.S. going to Mexico are at high risk of severe illness from influenza. At greatest risk are persons with chronic conditions such as diabetes, lung disease, heart disease, and the elderly. It is recommended that all persons traveling to Mexico take antiviral medications for prevention of swine influenza during travel. The recommended antiviral drugs for swine influenza are oseltamivir (brand name Tamiflu®) and zanamivir (brand name Relenza®). For more information on CDC's recommendations for antiviral use during the swine flu outbreak, please visit www.cdc.gov/swineflu.

According to International SOS and the U.S. State Department, there is no availability in Mexico of either of these drugs. The Mexican Government has seized control and using all available doses for hospitalized patients and *high risk personnel* such as doctors. The U.S. Government cannot control dispensation of any remedies outside of the United States and those who appear ill may not be allowed on a plane to return to the United States.

- Be up-to-date with all routine vaccinations, including seasonal influenza vaccine if available. There are no vaccines currently available for this particular virus strain and it is still unknown if the current human seasonal influenza vaccines can provide any protection.
- Pack a travel health kit that contains basic first aid and medical supplies.
- Check if personal health insurance will cover travel abroad. Consider purchasing additional insurance that covers medical evacuation if needed. For more information, see *Medical Information for Americans Traveling Abroad* from the U.S. Department of State.
- When traveling in an area affected by swine flu, monitor the local situation and pay attention to announcements from the local government.
- Register with the State Department at www.travel.state.gov.
- Follow local public health guidelines, including any movement restrictions and prevention recommendations.
- Identify the health-care resources in the area(s) of travel. Seek medical care if you are ill with fever and other symptoms of swine flu like cough and sore throat, especially if you think you may have had contact with someone with swine flu or severe respiratory illness in the past seven days before becoming ill.

- The symptoms of swine flu are expected to be similar to the symptoms of seasonal influenza and include fever, lethargy, lack of appetite and coughing. Some people with swine flu have also reported runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.
- If you need to find local medical care while in Mexico, a U.S. consular officer can give you a list of local medical services and will inform your family or friends in the United States of your illness. To contact the U.S. Embassy or consulate in Mexico, call the Overseas Citizens Services at:
 - 1-888-407-4747 if calling from the U.S. or Canada
 - 00 1 202-501-4444 if calling from overseas

Remember that U.S. embassies, consulates and military facilities do not have the legal authority, capability, and resources to give medications, vaccines or medical care to private U.S. citizens overseas.

Infection Precautions

- Follow all local health recommendations.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. Use waterless alcohol-based hand gels (containing at least 60% alcohol) when soap is not available.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and put your used tissue in a wastebasket.
- If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands.
- Wash your hands after coughing or sneezing, using soap and water or an alcohol-based hand gel.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Wear a surgical mask if you are in contact with other people.
 - Thoroughly wash hands before putting on and taking off the mask.
 - When removing the mask, do not touch the face covering, do not set the mask on any surface, put it in a disposable bag and do not set the bag on any surface. Dispose of the bag immediately, and thoroughly wash hands after disposing of it.
 - Never reuse a mask. It is considered contaminated after one use.
- Avoid close contact with other people as much as possible. It is suggested to keep a minimum social distance of three feet of all persons.

Returning from Travel

- Closely monitor your health for 7 days
- If you become ill with fever and other symptoms of swine flu like cough and sore throat and possibly vomiting and diarrhea during this period, call your doctor or clinic for an appointment right away. Your doctor may test you for influenza and decide whether influenza antiviral treatment is indicated.

Additional Information Provided by International SOS

The following additional information has been made available by International SOS:
www.internationalsos.com. It is based on the latest available, although limited, information.

What are the symptoms? Limited information is available at this stage. It appears that the early symptoms are similar to seasonal flu - cough, fever, sore throat, headache, runny nose, general fatigue, and muscle pains. Some patients have also had vomiting and diarrhea. Severe cases have progressed quickly (within 5 days) to a pneumonia-like illness, which involves shortness of breath and difficulty breathing.

Is this swine flu a severe illness? It appears that the virus is capable of causing severe disease. However, it is currently unknown how likely it is that infected people will suffer a severe illness. Most cases in the United States, Canada and Spain to date have been mild. There have been no fatalities.

In Mexico, there have been fatal cases. These deaths appear to have involved previously healthy young adults. The proportion of severe cases appears to be much higher than with regular seasonal flu. It is unknown why the disease appears to be more severe in Mexico than in other areas.

How is this swine flu spreading? It is most likely spreading from person to person in the same way other flu viruses spread: through infectious respiratory droplets (droplets released when a person coughs, sneezes or talks). If these get into a healthy person's nose or mouth, they can get infected.

Sometimes people get infected when they touch something with flu virus on it, then touch their mouth or nose. Flu virus can live on shared objects (doorknobs, keyboards, counters, etc.).

What is the infectious period? The infectious period for this strain is not yet known. According to the US CDC, infected people should be considered potentially contagious:

- one day before their symptoms start
- seven days after their symptoms start OR as long as they are still showing symptoms (whichever is longer)

Children, especially younger children, might potentially be contagious for longer periods.

What is the incubation period? The "incubation period" is the time between when a person was exposed to the virus and when they start having symptoms. The incubation period for this strain is not yet known.

With seasonal flu, people develop symptoms within about four days of infection. However, for this new strain of flu, the incubation period may be longer. U.S. CDC is currently advising people to monitor their health for 7 days after possible exposure.

Is there a vaccine? There is no specific vaccine against this swine flu. Regular seasonal flu vaccine is unlikely to provide protection against this strain. Nevertheless, those who have not had a seasonal flu vaccine should consider doing so.

As a general good health practice, people should make sure all their routine vaccinations are up-to-date. This includes pneumococcal vaccination for certain adults. This vaccine is usually recommended for all people over 65 years old and younger people with serious long-term health problems (heart disease, diabetes, alcoholism, COPD, emphysema, asthma, cancer treatment, HIV/AIDS). This [CDC information](#) can help people work with their doctor to decide if vaccination is the right choice for them.

Should employees be vaccinated against seasonal flu? All international travelers should be vaccinated annually for the flu, every year, to reduce their risk of developing seasonal influenza. However, it is unknown whether the current seasonal flu vaccination will offer any protection against the current H1N1 swine flu strain or the severe respiratory illness occurring in Mexico.

As a general good health practice, people should make sure all their routine vaccinations are up-to-date. This includes pneumococcal vaccination for certain adults (over age 65, those with a serious chronic illness or decreased immune function due to cancer, transplant, HIV/AIDS, etc.). This [CDC information](#) can help employees work with their doctor to decide if vaccination is the right choice.

Can swine flu be treated with antiviral medications? Preliminary information indicates that the virus is sensitive to the newer antiviral medications oseltamivir (Tamiflu) and zanamivir (Relenza). It is resistant to the older medications amantadine and rimantidine.

Can I catch swine flu from eating pork or pork products? No.

Should I travel to Mexico or the US? See the [Travel Recommendations](#) page for the latest travel advice.

An employee is currently in Mexico. Should they return home? Employees who are **currently well** can return home. They should closely monitor their health and watch for flu-like symptoms. If they develop symptoms, they should seek medical attention.

Employees who are **currently ill** should seek medical attention in Mexico before returning home. International SOS members should call the number on their membership cards for assistance.

An employee has recently returned from Mexico. Should they return to work? Employees who are **currently ill** should not return to work until they receive medical attention. They should tell their medical caregiver that they have recently been to Mexico.

Employees who **appear well** may still be carrying the virus. People who are infected may be able to pass the disease to others for one day before they show symptoms (see question "What is the infectious period?"). It is not yet known how long it takes for an infected person to start showing symptoms (see question "What is the incubation period?").

To reduce the risk of infection spreading within the workplace, it may be prudent to ask all employees returning from affected areas to remain away from the workplace for at least 72 hours even if they have no symptoms.

Once the incubation and infectious periods are better understood, the 72 hour period may change. Employees should continue to watch for flu-like symptoms even after they return to work.

Should employees take antiviral medication (Tamiflu) with them when traveling to Mexico?

This is an individual decision, which should be made in consultation with a health professional. Any time employees carry medication internationally; they should keep the original prescription with them and carry the medication in its original box. Employees should consult a medical professional before using antiviral medication.

Resources

U.S. Centers for Disease control

If you have specific questions about the swine influenza, go to <http://www.cdc.gov/contact/> or call 1-800-232-4636.

Also, go to

<http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/contentSwineFluMexico.aspx>

For the swine Influenza situation **in Mexico**, visit:

- [Secretaria de Salud](#): Secretary of Health, Mexico [Web page in Spanish]
- [World Health Organization](#): Influenza-Like Illness in the United States and Mexico
- The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) <http://new.paho.org/>
- U.S. State Department Travel Information http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_1764.html

US Consular Offices

The U.S. Embassy is located in Mexico City at Paseo de la Reforma 305, Colonia Cuauhtemoc; telephone from the United States: 011-52-55-5080-2000; telephone within Mexico City: 5080-2000; telephone long distance within Mexico 01-55-5080-2000. You may also contact the Embassy by e-mail at: ccs@usembassy.net.mx. The Embassy's web page is <http://mexico.usembassy.gov/eng/main.html>.

In addition to the Embassy, there are several United States Consulates and Consular Agencies located throughout Mexico:

Consulates

Ciudad Juarez: Ciudad Juarez: Paseo de la Victoria #3650, telephone (52) (656) 227-3000.

Guadalajara: Progreso 175, Col. Americana; telephone (52)(333) 268-2100.

Hermosillo: Calle Monterrey 141 Poniente, Col. Esqueda; telephone (52)(662) 289-3500.

Matamoros: Avenida Primera 2002 y Azaleas; telephone (52)(868) 812-4402.

Merida: Calle 60 No. 338 K x 29 y 31, Col. Alcala Martin; telephone (52)(999) 942-5700.

Monterrey: Avenida Constitucion 411 Poniente; telephone (52)(818) 047-3100.

Nogales: Calle San Jose, Fraccionamiento "Los Alamos"; telephone (52) (631) 311-8150.

Nuevo Laredo: Calle Allende 3330, Col. Jardin; telephone (52)(867) 714-0512.

Tijuana: Avenida Tapachula 96, Col. Hipodromo; telephone (52)(664) 622-7400.

Consular Agencies

Acapulco: Hotel Continental Emporio, Costera Miguel Aleman 121 - Local 14; telephone (52)(744) 484-0300 or (52)(744) 469-0556.

Cabo San Lucas: Blvd. Marina Local C-4, Plaza Nautica, Col. Centro; telephone (52)(624) 143-3566.

Cancun: Plaza Caracol Two, Second Level, No. 320-323, Boulevard Kukulcan, Km. 8.5, Zona Hotelera; telephone (52)(998) 883-0272.

Ciudad Acuna: Alfonso Gonzalez Ocampo # 305, Col. Centro; telephone (52)(877) 772-8179.

Cozumel: Plaza Villa Mar en El Centro, Plaza Principal, (Parque Juárez between Melgar and 5th Ave.) 2nd floor, Locales #8 and 9; telephone (52)(987) 872-4574.

Ixtapa/Zihuatanejo: Hotel Fontan, Blvd. Ixtapa; telephone (52)(755) 553-2100.

Mazatlan: Hotel Playa Mazatlán, Playa Gaviotas #202, Zona Dorada; telephone (52)(669) 916-5889.

Oaxaca: Macedonio Alcalá No. 407, Interior 20; telephone (52)(951) 514-3054 (52) or (951) 516-2853.

Piedras Negras: Abasolo 211, Local #3, Col. Centro; telephone (52)(878) 782-5586 or (878) 782-8664.

Playa del Carmen: The Palapa, Calle 1 Sur, between Avenida 15 and Avenida 20.; telephone (52)(984) 873-0303.

Puerto Vallarta: Paseo de Los Cocoteros #85 Sur, Paradise Plaza – Local L-7, Nuevo Vallarta, Nayarit C.P.; telephone (52)(322) 222-0069.

Reynosa: Calle Monterrey #390, Esq. Sinaloa, Col. Rodríguez; telephone: (52)(899) 923-9331

San Luis Potosi: Edificio "Las Terrazas", Avenida Venustiano Carranza 2076-41, Col. Polanco; telephone (52)(444) 811-7802 or (444) 811-7803.

San Miguel de Allende: Dr. Hernandez Macias #72; telephone (52)(415) 152-2357.