



A health and safety bulletin from

Tri-State Occupational Health and WORKSAFE IOWA

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The Big Picture

Let's not forget the need for seasonal flu protection in the midst of all the attention on the H1N1 virus. The need for separate vaccinations, differentiation of priority groups, and other concerns should be clearly communicated. The Iowa Department of Public Health covers both H1N1 and seasonal flu issues on the "flu.gov" mapping project. A specific link for businesses provides actions steps, fact sheet for employees, a poster, and communications templates.

"The Current Flu Situation" - www.flu.gov/individualfamily/about/current/index.html#learn

"Seasonal Flu" - www.flu.gov/individualfamily/about/seasonalflu/index.html

"Flu News, Information, and Resources" - www.flu.gov/whereyoulive/healthmap/

Value of RIDTs for H1N1

Rapid Influenza Diagnostic Tests (RIDTs) have been useful for patient care during the normal flu season largely because they usually provide results within 30 minutes. The performance of an RIDT in patients infected with 2009 H1N1 virus was analyzed in Greenwich (CT)-where students and teachers in 2 schools were infected-and found to detect fewer than half the cases that had been confirmed by other testing. Although this study involved a limited number of patients from two small outbreaks, the results were comparable to other recently reported observations, and they support current recommendations not to use negative RIDT results to rule out pandemic H1N1 or to make infection control decisions.

CDC (MMWR) - www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5837a1.htm?s_cid=mm5837a1_e

Transmission Risk to Healthcare Workers

Personal protection equipment (PPE) is an important component of infection prevention efforts in healthcare facilities. A 2009 report by an independent committee of the Institute of Medicine provides background on flu transmission, current CDC and WHO infection control guidelines, and other topics. The committee recommended that 1) all healthcare workers in contact with H1N1 influenza use (at a minimum) fit-tested N95 respirators, and 2) increased research be funded on the various routes of influenza transmission, the effectiveness of PPE in a variety of clinical settings, and the next generation of PPE technologies.

Respiratory Protection for Healthcare Workers in the Workplace Against Novel H1N1 Influenza A: A Letter Report (free pdf - National Academies Press) - www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=12748

A Bleak History

On September 28, 1918, a Liberty Loan parade (part of the national drive for the sale of liberty bonds) prompted an outbreak of influenza in Philadelphia, the US city that was the hardest hit during the worldwide epidemic. The entire city was quarantined and nearly 12,000 residents died. Overall, 5 out of every 1,000 people in the US fell victim to the flu. The death toll was much worse in the rest of the world: in Latin America, 10 out of every 1,000 people died, in Africa, 15/1,000, and in Asia it was as high as 35/1,000. By the time the epidemic ended, an estimated 30 million people were dead worldwide.

photo - Liberty Loan parade - <http://z.about.com/d/history1900s/1/0/w/E/1/flu2.jpg>

Tri-State Occupational Health is a member of the WORKSAFE IOWA Occupational Medicine Associate Network, the only university-affiliated network of occupational health providers. WORKSAFE IOWA is an outreach program of the Department of Occupational and Environmental Health in the College of Public Health at the University of Iowa (www.public-health.uiowa.edu/worksafe).