LOUISIANA GUIDANCE FOR CLINICIANS ON THE NEED FOR MEDICAL EVALUATION, TESTING, AND TREATMENT OF POSSIBLE NOVEL H1N1 “SWINE” FLU. 05/07/09

Clinicians in Louisiana should now use the attached clinical algorithm for evaluation, testing and treatment of influenza like illness or possible novel H1N1 “Swine” flu.

Novel H1N1 (referred to as “Swine” flu early on) is the influenza virus causing mild illness in people. This new virus was first detected in the United States in April, 2009 and has now spread across the globe. This virus is spreading from person-to-person, probably in much the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread by coughing, sneezing and touching contaminated surfaces.

The symptoms of the H1N1 flu virus in people are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. A significant number of people who have been infected with this virus also have reported diarrhea and vomiting. Also, like seasonal flu, some severe illnesses and deaths have occurred as a result of illnesses associated with this virus.

The high risk groups for novel H1N1 flu are not known at this time, but it is probable that they are similar to those for seasonal influenza. People at higher risk of serious complications from seasonal flu include people age 65 and older, children younger than 5 years of age, pregnant women, people of any age with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), and people who are immunosuppressed (e.g., taking immunosuppressive medications, infected with HIV).

At the current time, CDC believes that this virus has the same properties in terms of spread as seasonal flu viruses. With seasonal flu, studies have shown that people may be contagious from one day before the onset of symptoms, and up to 7 days after they get sick. Children, especially young children, might potentially be contagious for longer periods. CDC is studying the virus and its capabilities to try and learn more, and will provide more information as it becomes available.

It is expected that most people with novel H1N1 will recover without needing medical care, or testing to see if they have H1N1 flu. Because this flu is so widespread, there is little need to continue testing people with mild or moderate illness that would normally be managed at home.

However if patients have severe illness, or are at high risk for flu complications, they should contact their health care provider by telephone to seek advice about further medical care. The health care provider should focus on illness severity and test and treat the cases which require hospitalization or are considered high risk.

Antiviral drugs should only be given to treat those who are hospitalized, or are at high risk for complications from influenza. These antiviral drugs are prescription medicines with activity against the H1N1 flu virus. These medications should be prescribed by a health care provider according to the attached algorithm.

Additional therapy, such as antibacterial agents, should be used at the discretion of the clinicians given the patients clinical presentation.
In children, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

In adults, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

Attached please find the clinical algorithm to aid in the evaluation, testing, and treatment of influenza like illness in the State of Louisiana. If you need additional information on testing or treatment of a specific high risk case, clinicians should contact the Louisiana Office of Public Health Epidemiology Hotline at (800) 256-2748.
State of Louisiana clinical Algorithm for the evaluation of influenza like illness and/or possible H1N1 “Swine” flu, 05/07/09

Patient presents with:
- Fever >37.8°C (100°F) and
- Respiratory symptoms (may include cough, sore throat, etc) or
- Sepsis-like syndrome

No influenza testing recommended. Additional workup and follow up as clinically indicated.

Yes

Implement appropriate infection control measures

Do patient’s symptoms indicate need for hospitalization?

Yes

Hospitalize as clinically appropriate
Obtain any of the following: nasopharyngeal swab; nasal aspirate; nasal swab plus throat swab; or nasal wash
- Place swab, aspirate or wash in viral transport media
- Store and ship at refrigerated temperatures (2-4°C)
- Send to state public health laboratory for RT-PCR testing

- Recommend early antiviral treatment with oseltamivir or zanamivir, particularly if patient is severely ill or at high risk for complications
- Use clinical judgment to decide whether additional antibacterial therapy is needed

No

1) No influenza testing necessary
2) If patient is at risk for complications, recommend early treatment with antiviral agents. If patient is not in high risk group, use physician discretion for treatment.
3) Consider additional workup for other respiratory conditions and co-infections if warranted.
4) Stay home for 7 days or until symptom free for 24 hours, whichever is longest
5) Use hand, respiratory and cough hygiene

1. As with seasonal influenza, infants, adults ≥65 years-old, and persons with compromised immune systems may have atypical presentations.
2. Information on infection control can be found at: http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/guidelines_infection_control.htm
4. Real-time polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) is the preferred laboratory test for identifying H1N1 (swine flu) virus. Rapid antigen tests and immunofluorescence tests have unknown sensitivity and specificity to detect H1N1 (swine flu) virus. For more information, please see http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/specimencollection.htm.
5. Persons at high risk of complications: Children less than 5 years old; persons aged 65 years or older; children and adolescents (aged 6 months–18 years) who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy and who might be at risk for experiencing Reye syndrome after influenza virus infection; pregnant women; adults and children who have chronic pulmonary, cardiovascular, hepatic, hematological, neurologic, neuromuscular, or metabolic disorders; adults and children who have immunosuppression (including immunosuppression caused by medications or by HIV); and residents of nursing homes and other chronic-care facilities.
6. Information on use of antiviral agents can be found at: http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/recommendations.htm
7. Interim guidance for clinicians is available at: http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/identifyingpatients.htm

Please note: these algorithms do not apply to providers participating in the US Outpatient Influenza-like Illness Surveillance Network (ILINet). For guidance related to ILI Net see: http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/screening.htm