

6 May 2013

Dear Valued Clients

H7N9 Update 4

1. What is the current situation?



A month has passed since the first case of H7N9 was reported on April 1st and a lot has transpired since then.

As of 2 May 2013 (1600 CET), a total of 128 laboratory-confirmed cases of human infection with H7N9 have been reported, including 26 deaths. This gives H7N9 a mortality rate (percentage of people who die from the virus) of about 20%, reflecting the seriousness of this outbreak.

In addition, H7N9 has spread to include more states/provinces in China in the north and more significantly, Taiwan reported its first case of “imported bird flu” H7N9 on April 24th.

2. What do we know about how H7N9 spreads currently?

There still remains a lot to be learnt about H7N9, most pressing of all, will be to identify the actual reservoir/source of infection, without which, it is expected that there will be further cases of human infection with the virus.

What we do know about H7N9 is that it is a virus that originated due to multiple reassortments/ mutations of genes in viruses previously found in ducks, migratory birds and poultry.

Currently, transmission is still limited from infected poultry to humans with only a few possible sporadic cases of possible human to human transmission. Essentially, H7N9 has not yet shown an ability for **easy and sustained human to human transmission**.



3. What can H7N9 cause?

Milder forms of H7N9 cause similar symptoms as other influenza viruses like fever, cough, headaches and body aches.

However, H7N9 has shown an increased ability to cause more severe respiratory illness with most patients hospitalised and about 2/3 of these patients requiring intensive unit care. About 1 in 5 H7N9 patients eventually die due to the severity of their illness.



4. The “Dos and Don’ts” to protect yourself from H7N9

a. DO NOT

- Get near or be in contact with migratory birds or live poultry
- Do not purchase poultry products from dubious sources
- Slaughter your own live poultry
- Eat raw poultry-related products, including eggs

b. DO

- Practise your hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene religiously
- Eat well-cooked food. Influenza viruses get killed at high temperatures, i.e. 56 degrees Celsius for 3 hours, 60 degrees Celsius for 30 minutes or 100 degrees Celsius for 1 minute
- Be alert to symptoms of influenza at all times
- Get yourself vaccinated with the influenza vaccine to protect yourself against the common strains of influenza



Raffles Medical has officially launched our travel clinic at Raffles Hospital and Changi Airport Terminal 3 to better serve our patients who may be travelling overseas soon. Common travel vaccinations like influenza vaccine are readily available in our travel clinics and we have Tamiflu available for standby for patients going to China. Do contact us for an appointment, preferably 2 weeks prior departure, to see our travel doctors who can better advise and tailor a medical management plan for your upcoming travels.

Should you require further information or clarification, please contact our Corporate Services Team or Account Managers for assistance.

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