

What Do We Need to Know About Pandemic Influenza?

First of All___ What is it? And What is the difference in Seasonal Flu and Pandemic Flu?

1. **There is a Difference In Seasonal Flu and Pandemic Flu.** Flu is a viral infection of the lungs. There are TWO MAIN types of flu virus, **A and B**. Each type includes many different strains. New strains emerge periodically. Flu outbreaks occur most often in late fall and winter. Pandemic flu can occur any time of the year.

Pandemic flu is a **global outbreak of disease** that occurs when a **NEW Influenza A virus** appears in humans, causes serious illness and then spreads from person to person worldwide.

A Pandemic is caused by a **new virus** that most people have never been exposed to so **everyone is susceptible**. Flu PANDEMICS have led to high levels of illness, death, social disruption, and economic loss.

Seasonal outbreaks of flu are caused by strains of flu viruses similar to those in past years. Some people may have built up immunity, and there is also a vaccine for each year's flu season.

2. **It is not a matter of "IF" but "WHEN" we will have a Pandemic. Pandemics Happen.**

There have been 10 Pandemics in the past 300 years. The average number of years between pandemics has been 24 years. Three pandemics occurred in the 20th century, all of which spread around the world within one year of being detected.

During the 20th century, the pandemic of 1918-1919 (which some called the “Spanish Flu”) was the most severe and caused 50 million or more deaths. It is considered one of the deadliest disease events in human history.

The 1957 “Asian Flu” (2 million deaths were estimated), and the 1968 “Hong Kong Flu” with one million deaths are pandemics many of us remember. **The last Pandemic was 40 years ago.**

Experts from around the world are watching the H5N1 avian (bird) flu situation in the Middle East, Europe, and Asia----- and are preparing for the possibility that the virus may begin to spread more easily from person-to-person. We are currently in what the World Health Organization calls a “Pandemic Alert” Phase. There are 6 distinct phases of a Pandemic which the WHO has defined. These phases assist with planning. **We are in Phase 3** in which “Limited Human-to Human transmission” has occurred. Fortunately, the virus H5N1 does not jump easily from birds to humans or spread readily and sustainably among humans.

-When the virus evolves into a form as contagious as normal influenza, a pandemic can begin.

-Because the human immune system has no pre-existing immunity---it makes it likely that the people who contract pandemic influenza experience more serious disease----- than what is caused by normal influenza.

-This avian flu strain has **pandemic potential** since it might ultimately adapt to a strain that is contagious AMONG humans. Once this adaptation occurs, it will no longer be a “bird flu” virus- it will be a human flu virus.

All of the previous Pandemic Flu viruses in our last century **began as a bird flu virus.**

The **pandemics of the previous century encircled the globe in 6-9 months** even when most international travel was by ship. Pandemics usually last for 1 1/2 to 2 years.

Pandemic Flu activity occurs in communities and **lasts 6-8 weeks**. In 20th century pandemics a second wave of flu activity occurred 3-12 months after the first wave.

The first wave is the most serious when the vaccine is not available for protection. The goal during the first six months of a pandemic becomes: **SLOW the SPREAD** in as many ways as possible.

3. Virginia is Preparing, Longwood is Preparing, The world health organizations are preparing. If a new and severe strain of flu were to begin spreading around the globe, Virginia would not be spared from its impact. **Longwood would not be spared.**

(Note today's data: 239 cases with 140 deaths website: 8/17/06)

The Virginia Dept. of Health is leading efforts to raise awareness of this issue and to help Virginians better understand how a pandemic will impact daily activities we all take for granted such as having to close schools or cancel sporting events and large public gatherings during a pandemic.

Longwood participated in the Virginia Summit which addressed how colleges and universities should be preparing:

-The national Secretary of Health and Human Services (Leavitt) was there and he stressed Individual/Family preparation. He said "We may be the first generation in history to do something in advance of this and we have a moral obligation to do it"

-The head of the US Public Health Service (Dr. Agwunobi) told us "we hope it will not happen but 'HOPE is not a strategy' "

-Each community will need to work together to mobilize its own resources, response, and recovery because this will not be an isolated event; it will be affecting all communities in the US simultaneously.

4. Longwood is participating in community planning with the town and county. We have representation from Longwood on the local emergency planning group.

5. The aim today is to increase your awareness as an individual and as a community. We have opportunities to prepare.

6. When a pandemic occurs there is approximately 4-6 months before a new influenza vaccine can be prepared.

7. Basic hygiene and prevention will be critical to SLOW THE SPREAD. We must review basic, simple, hygiene measures that will protect you against the spread of the flu and other germs and viruses:

-COVER your NOSE and MOUTH with a tissue (or use your sleeve) when coughing or sneezing

-Wash your hands thoroughly and often. (Use soap and water when possible and lather and scrub your hands together for at least 15-20 seconds)

-Avoid touching your EYES NOSE or MOUTH.

-Stay Home when you are sick! When you have a fever. This is something we should each talk to our supervisors about.

The website (www.longwood.edu/pandemicflu) will give you many resources and a lot to read about pandemic flu preparation.

8. On the website **There are checklists for Individuals and Families AND Colleges and Universities which Longwood is using.** The checklists are useful for practical things to think about ---- to prepare.

This planning and responding is something Longwood has experience with. Because of the fire and Hurricane Isabel we have had some practice in Emergency Response Planning. We have an organization in place, The Emergency Response Team, and it is incorporating public health event planning (like Pandemic Flu) into its overall plan.

9. **The President and the Cabinet as well as all of the Executive Administration are now aware of Pandemic Flu Preparation resources.** Our plans and discussions (even the checklists) are all posted on the website. Each of us has a fit, within the Longwood community plan. Look at it. Find your unit. Talk about it. We can look at the documents (and help others without access) and print out plans that apply in our areas or to us individually. Many offices and work units have been educated and if your unit wants more information please talk with your leadership.

10. **Students are being educated and are helping educate peers.** We are notifying all returning students and new students about the website and “the top 10 ways to stay healthy”. The Student Health Partners, Wellness Advocates, Peer Helpers, student leaders, and RA’s are just some of the student citizens who will be utilized and challenged to educate their peers and talk about how they are preparing individually and with their families at home.

11. **We are pledged to provide accurate, current information about a topic that is changing and evolving.** -- Dave Hooper and colleagues in Public Relations have put the

website to the forefront. PLEASE utilize the site to learn more for yourself and your family.

- In the event of a change in the PANDEMIC PHASE we will be able to take our information to Longwood's Front Page to communicate the latest recommendations -----
--not only for all of us at Longwood who work here , but for students and their families.
- Challenge someone in YOUR home or family to look at it and ask you something about what they have seen on the site.
- Power point presentations from the Virginia Emergency Planners and The American College Health Association conferences are available on the website to use as a slide show/resource if you want to present or discuss Pandemic Flu in a class, work setting, or community group. PLEASE feel free to share them and all of the resources.
- **If you know** of other resources or have questions please feel free to email me. We will also be available at our Information Table in Lankford after lunch.

Finally.....

- The globe stress ball is a reminder for each of you to carry home or to your office. The **message is small ---but powerful** and applies to each of us.

Thank you.

Remarks submitted By Pam Evans, Director of Health and Wellness Center

August 18, 2006 at President Cormier's ----Welcome to Faculty and Staff Luncheon