

Seqirus Media Monitoring

25th Jan 2019

Seqirus mentions

Single flu vaccine to cover all adults in 2019/20, NHS England confirms

In a letter published on Wednesday, NHS England revealed that the new cell-grown quadrivalent vaccine QIVc - licenced for use in the UK last week - had been deemed safe and effective across all age groups by the government's vaccination advisory committee. The letter, sent by NHS England's national medical director Professor Stephen Powis said: 'The vaccines recommended for the 2018/19 season continue to be recommended for the 2019/20 season... In addition, QIVc - Flucelvax Tetra - is now licensed for use in the UK for patients aged nine years and upwards.'

<https://www.gponline.com/single-flu-vaccine-cover-adults-2019-20-nhs-england-confirms/article/1523772>

Vaxigrip Tetra: Sanofi supplies an extra 79,000 vaccine doses

In Germany, there has been a flu vaccine shortage. Sanofi Pasteur has managed to organise another 79,000 doses of Vaxigrip Tetra to be supplied to doctors and pharmacies there. In the meantime, Seqirus has been granted EU approval for cell-based flu vaccine Flucelvax Tetra, which might well be a positive way to deal with any shortages next flu season. More regions are trying to put in their orders early as well.

https://www.apotheke-adhoc.de/nachrichten/detail/pharmazie/vaxigrip-tetra-sanofi-organisiert-79000-impfdosen/?tx_aponews_newsdetail%5B%40widget_4%5D%5BcurrentPage%5D=2&tx_aponews_newsdetail%5B%40widget_4%5D%5BitemsPerPage%5D=1&cHash=b8eee1997fc4c077ac496aca13339a99

Industry News

FDA approves Sanofi's flu vaccine in children as young as 6 months

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has approved the use of the 0.5 mL dose of Fluzone Quadrivalent to include children age 6 months through 35 months. Sanofi Pasteur will have the 0.5 mL dose, in addition to the 0.25 mL dose, available for the upcoming 2019-2020 season

<https://njbiz.com/fda-approves-sanofis-flu-vaccine-children-young-6-months/>

Additional sources: (Zacks.com) (Precision Vaccinations) (Contagion Live) (Pharmacy Practice News)

Pandemic Influenza News

One hundred years on, could we cope with a new flu pandemic?

A review of Jeremy Brown's 'Influenza: The Quest to Cure the Deadliest Disease in History'. Dr Brown is director of emergency care research at the US National Institutes of Health. He explains what a virus is, and how it works, and interviews Jeff Taubenberger, also of the NIH, and possibly the world's top influenza specialist. He explains that another flu pandemic might well happen, and that we are better prepared to treat secondary infections with antibiotics, but that we do not have a vaccine ready.

<https://www.spectator.co.uk/2019/01/one-hundred-years-on-could-we-cope-with-a-new-flu-pandemic/>

Flu Vaccine Stored for Pandemic Risk Found Safe, Immunogenic

Influenza vaccine stored up to 12 years as part of the US Department of Health and Human Services' pandemic readiness plan is safe and immunogenic, a study has found. The H5N1 avian influenza antigen and adjuvant maintained their functional integrity in the National Pre-Pandemic Influenza Vaccine Stockpile, according to testing led by Rick Bright, PhD, director of the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA).

<https://www.mdmag.com/medical-news/flu-vaccine-stored-for-pandemic-risk-found-safe-immunogenic>

Academic studies

Flu science points to another culprit when vaccines fail — us

A growing body of evidence suggests that sometimes our immune systems simply don't follow the instructions a vaccine tries to give them — that is, make antibodies to fight a particular H3N2 or H1N1 virus. The reason? We all have flu baggage that shapes the way our immune systems respond to both infections and vaccines. Figuring out what happens with the earliest flu infections could point to ways to make more effective influenza vaccines.

<https://www.statnews.com/2019/01/24/flu-science-points-to-another-culprit-when-vaccines-fail-us/>

Imperial scientists present vaccine revolution to world leaders at WEF in Davos

Three Imperial scientists presented their ideas on next generation vaccines to global leaders at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. The academics from Imperial's Network for Vaccine Research, joined leaders from the G20 and other countries, CEOs of multinationals, members of international organisations and other scientists at the WEF Annual Meeting. Professor Robin Shattock is working on the manufacturing of RNA vaccines to create quicker and more accessible responsiveness to outbreaks. Professor Wendy Barclay is aiming to understand whether there is a potential to develop disease control through new measures of animal protection, exploring transgenic animals and how they could impact vaccine spread. Professor Jason Hallett is working on thermal stabilisation of vaccines allowing them to exist in room temperature without destroying their efficacy.

<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/news/189957/imperial-scientists-present-vaccine-revolution-world/>

New study determines factors that can send flu patients to the ICU

Numerous independent factors – including a history of obstructive/central sleep apnea syndrome (OSAS/CSAS) or myocardial infarction, along with a body mass index greater than 30 g/m² – could be related to ICU admission and subsequent high mortality rates in influenza patients, according to an analysis of patients in the Netherlands who were treated during the influenza epidemic of 2015-2016.

<https://www.the-hospitalist.org/hospitalist/article/193225/infectious-diseases/new-study-determines-factors-can-send-flu-patients>

Disparity in Flu, Pneumococcal Vaccination Among Older Adults

Disparities in vaccination rates exist among racial/ethnic minority adults. This study examined factors associated with influenza and pneumococcal vaccination rates among non-Hispanic black, Hispanic, and Asian American adults aged 50 or older living in New York City or Los Angeles and Orange counties in California. When compared with Asian American respondents, non-Hispanic black respondents were least likely to receive the flu vaccine in New York City and California. Researchers found no racial/ethnic differences in pneumococcal vaccination rates. Findings highlight the need for targeted efforts to increase vaccination rates among racial/ethnic minority older adults.

<https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/907225>

Flu Vaccine Safe and Effective for AChR Antibody-positive MG Patients, Study Reports

Patients with myasthenia gravis (MG), who are positive for the acetylcholine receptor (AChR) antibody, respond effectively to influenza vaccination, even if taking immunosuppressants. Also, influenza vaccination is safe, and does not exacerbate MG symptoms in these patients, according to a study.

<https://myastheniagravisnews.com/2019/01/24/achr-antibody-positive-mg-patients-similar-responses-to-influenza-vaccination-healthy-controls-study-reports/>

HIV-Positivity Not Associated With Higher Household Influenza Transmission

Transmission of the seasonal influenza virus did not demonstrate a positive association with HIV-positive status despite the increased vulnerability to infection in individuals with HIV, according to a study recently published in the Journal of Infectious Diseases.

<https://www.infectiousdiseaseadvisor.com/hiv/aids/hiv-negative-serostatus-negatively-associated-with-transmitting-flu/article/829065/>

Pediatric influenza news

More kindergartens forced to shut as flu death toll rises to 74

More than 300 kindergartens and childcare centers have suspended classes as the death toll from influenza and its complications during the current winter flu season rises. Meanwhile, the government is set to announce that kindergartens and childcare centers will start the Lunar New Year holidays earlier in the face of the flu outbreaks, according to media reports.

<http://www.ejinsight.com/20190124-more-kindergartens-forced-to-shut-as-flu-death-toll-rises-to-74/>

All HK kindergartens told to close early to curb influenza

The Hong Kong government has announced that all kindergartens and childcare centers will close starting Saturday until the end of their scheduled Chinese New Year holidays to curb the spread of influenza. Dr Wong Ka-hing, the head of the Centre for Health Protection, said the flu outbreak among children this year was "very serious" compared with the past couple of years

<http://www.atimes.com/article/all-hk-kindergartens-told-to-close-early-to-curb-influenza/>

3-year-old girl dies as flu hits children harder this season

A three-year-old girl from Quebec has died from the flu during an influenza season that is taking its toll on younger Canadians. Dr. Anne Pham-Huy, a pediatric physician and infectious disease specialist at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO), said Charlotte's case highlights the unpredictability of influenza. She also explained that while flu vaccines don't work 100 per cent of the time, they're still the best defence against the infection.

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/3-year-old-girl-dies-as-flu-hits-children-harder-this-season-1.4267083>

Flu hitting children harder this year, says IWK doctor

This year's flu season is in full swing and doctors in Canada are seeing more infants and young children being hospitalized. And despite the fact that the vaccine is free on P.E.I. and in many other provinces, people are still going unvaccinated. "Most of the cases we see are due to lack of immunization," Dr. Scott Halperin, medical director of the Canadian Centre for Vaccinology at the IWK Hospital in Halifax, told CBC News:Compass host Louise Martin.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/prince-edward-island/pei-iwk-doctor-vaccine-children-1.4989867>

Severe Flu in Pregnant Women Linked to Poor Outcomes in Newborns

Pregnant women who are seriously ill with influenza are more likely to deliver babies with complications than those without the flu or with milder cases, a study that considered more than 3000 pregnancies has found. "Severely ill women with 2009 H1N1 influenza during pregnancy were more likely to have adverse birth outcomes, such as their baby being born preterm or of low birth weight than women without influenza," lead author Kimberly Newsome, MPH, BSN, said

<https://www.mdmag.com/medical-news/severe-flu-pregnant-women-linked-poor-outcomes-newborns>

Over 65's influenza news

Seniors more susceptible to flu complications

Flu-related complications, hospitalizations and deaths in adults are generally most common in people over age 65, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). According to Ronan Factora, M.D., a geriatric physician at Cleveland Clinic, older people may have a tough time with the flu because of changes that take place in the body as we age.

<https://www.abc4.com/health/seniors-more-susceptible-to-flu-complications/1722762640>

General Influenza News

This season's flu shot far more effective than last year's, researchers find

In Canada, this season's influenza vaccine appears to be highly effective, reducing the risk of infection with the dominant circulating flu strain by more than 70 per cent — far better than what was seen with last year's shot, Canadian researchers say. Their mid-season analysis shows this year's flu vaccine is 72 per cent effective in preventing infection with the H1N1 respiratory virus overall across all age groups.

<https://www.thechronicleherald.ca/news/this-seasons-flu-shot-far-more-effective-than-last-years-researchers-find-278560/>

Additional sources: (Sudbury.com)

'Vaccine Hesitancy' In WHO's Top 10 Health Threats For 2019 With Ebola, HIV

WHO has named vaccine hesitancy as one of the main threats to public health in its 2019 10 Threats to Global Health list. Its inclusion drew a lot of stunned reactions, particularly from people against vaccinations. Robert F. Kennedy Jr., anti-vaccine activist and chairman of the Children's Health Defense, was quoted saying that the WHO deliberately ignored research and was using its latest 10 Threats to Global Health list to steer international health policies. Conversely, the same report cited Vanderbilt University School of Medicine professor Dr. William Schaffner's surprised yet impressed response to its inclusion in the roster, saying that it's high time the issue is recognized for its impact

<https://www.ibtimes.com/vaccine-hesitancy-whos-top-10-health-threats-2019-ebola-hiv-2755693>

Vaccination: "fake news" on social media may be harming UK uptake, report warns

The spread of misinformation and "fake news" on social media may be fuelling public concern about potential side effects of vaccination and could restrict uptake, the Royal Society for Public Health has warned. Although the UK maintains "world leading" levels of vaccine coverage, the extent to which social media propagates misinformation about vaccinations is a concern, it said.

<https://www.bmj.com/content/364/bmj.l365>

Mandatory vaccines the answer to growing global issue

Comment piece on the rise of anti-vaxxers and the fact many governments choose to appease them by amending legislation to easily allow parents to opt-out of immunizations. The piece concludes thus "Canada must follow other developed nations in stricter enforcement of vaccinations. Australia has begun to cut child benefit payments for parents who refuse to immunize their children. Canada must examine similar models of enforcement. More than just an extra burden on our universal healthcare system, those who choose not to vaccinate their kids are putting the lives of countless vulnerable people at risk."

<http://www.themanitoban.com/2019/01/mandatory-vaccines-the-answer-to-growing-global-issue/36537/>

P.E.I. health-care unions fight vaccinate-or-mask policy

In Canada, unions that represent health-care staff on P.E.I. have filed a grievance with Health PEI over a new flu shot policy. The policy went into effect on Sept. 1, 2018 and recommends that all health-care workers should get the annual flu shot. It also says once Public Health has identified lab-confirmed cases of the flu, the procedure for any front-line workers who have not been immunized is to wear a surgical mask within two metres of any patient.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/prince-edward-island/pei-flu-shot-healthcare-workers-1.4988636>

Parents' vaccine side effects fear 'fuelled by social media'

Fear of a vaccine's side effects is the top reason for people refusing them, a report from the Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH) suggests. Among parents, this was fuelled by social media, with up to half exposed to negative messages about vaccines. The Society's report called for social media

platforms and the press to do more to combat "fake news". Millions of lives have been saved through vaccination, and side effects are rare, it said.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-46972429>

The endless hunt for the perfect flu vaccine

Article adapted from Jeremy Brown's book 'Influenza: The Quest to Cure the Deadliest Disease in History', in which the evolution of vaccines, flu pandemics and vaccination policies is discussed. How different countries approach flu vaccination and how this impacts on lives saved, and the search for the holy grail, a universal flu vaccine

<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2019/jan/24/endless-hunt-for-the-perfect-influenza-vaccine-flu-jab>

Flu season has arrived in the Bay Area. Here's what you need to know

Though this year's flu season has nothing on last year's — one of deadliest in the past decade — when it comes to influenza, vigilance is ever important, say infectious disease and public health experts. Local and state reports show that the flu season is well under way in the Bay Area, with the first deaths announced this month. Now that the flu is again widely circulating, doctors, nurses and public health officials are closely watching several key surveillance reports to help them prepare for the season at hand.

<https://www.sfchronicle.com/health/article/Flu-season-has-arrived-in-the-Bay-Area-Here-s-13555716.php>

Flu warning: Vaccine not always effective but could mean difference between life or death

Flu season is already having a "high impact" on hospitals across Britain and one virologist has warned the vaccine may, in some cases, not be as effective as it should be in offering immunity to the viral infection. But Dr Connor Bamford, a virologist at the MRC-University of Glasgow Centre for Virus Research in Scotland, warned that despite fears the vaccine may not be effective on every person, it could "mean the difference between life or death". Dr Bamford highlighted on the "easiest" way to prevent getting the flu virus - urging people who are worried about catching the illness to get vaccinated.

<https://www.express.co.uk/life-style/health/1077378/flu-symptoms-news-2019-cold-fever-vaccine-warning-health-UK-PHE>

This year's flu shot is 72% effective against the dominant strain - much better than last year's, researchers say

Canadian researchers say that this year's flu vaccine appears to reduce the risk of catching the dominant flu strain by 72 per cent - much better than last year's flu shot. "A vaccine effectiveness of about 70 per cent means that among 10 cases of influenza in unvaccinated people, the number would have been reduced to just three cases if they had been vaccinated," explained lead researcher Dr. Danuta Skowronski of the B.C. Centre for Disease Control.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/4885636/flu-shot-effectiveness-canada/>

Alberta Health Services says the flu shot is very effective this year

Alberta Health Services says there is a lot to be proud about with the effectiveness of the seasonal flu shot. Doctors say that preliminary reports show the flu shot seems to have reduced the risk posed by the H1N1 flu strain by approximately 72 percent. "The vaccine was extremely effective this year as compared to past years, which is wonderful. So, patients who haven't been immunized should go and get their shot because it's very effective," said Dr. Jia Hu with AHS' Calgary Zone.

<https://calgary.ctvnews.ca/alberta-health-services-says-the-flu-shot-is-very-effective-this-year-1.4268015>

Burden of disease

Third flu-related death reported in El Paso

An elderly woman has died from the flu, according to El Paso Department of Public Health officials.

Officials said the woman was in her mid-80s and had not been vaccinated against the influenza virus. They also said she did have underlying medical conditions. So far this flu season three people have died from the flu.

<https://kfoxtv.com/news/local/third-flu-related-death-reported-in-el-paso>

Season's worst: on the influenza outbreak

Seasonal influenza poses a significant public health challenge for India every year. The spurt in infections during the first two weeks of 2019 cries out for an effective plan to contain it. Rajasthan, which had a big case load last year, is the worst-affected State in the current season, with 768 cases and 31 deaths as of January 13.

<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/seasons-worst/article26082786.ece>

Uttarakhand reports over 40% mortality rate from swine flu in January, toll reaches 11

The mortality rate in swine flu this year has become a cause of concern in Uttarakhand. In Dehradun, 11 deaths due to the disease have been registered so far out of the total 27 confirmed cases of H1N1 influenza. The death toll due to swine flu rose to 11 on Wednesday after a one-year-old boy from Uttarkashi succumbed to the disease in Dehradun's Shri Mahant Indresh Hospital (SMIH).

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/dehradun/uttarakhand-reports-over-40-mortality-rate-from-swine-flu-in-january-toll-reaches-11/story-uBGOHflvRNWWJjwIFrsoDI.html>

Mongolia: Warning of a "kids' crisis" as influenza outbreak grips

An outbreak of Influenza A (H1N1) in Mongolia has been called a "kids' crisis" by the Mongolian Red Cross Society, with children under five accounting for more than two-thirds of cases reported up to 18 January. Health services are increasingly stretched. According to the Ministry of Health, an average of 139 influenza patients are hospitalized every day. Of these, almost 90 per cent are infants and children under the age of five. Hospitals in the capital, Ulaanbaatar, usually have the capacity to admit 977 children but are struggling to find beds for more than 1,500 children currently hospitalized in the city. As of 24 January, four children have unfortunately died of influenza.

<https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/press-release/mongolia-warning-kids-crisis-influenza-outbreak-grips/>

Flu cases climb again, although central Pa. watcher still sees hope for mild season

After dropping for two consecutive weeks, flu cases rebounded, according to the latest figures from the Pennsylvania Department of Health. Still, the number of confirmed cases during the week that ended Saturday is far below levels of last flu season, one of the most deadly in decades. Dr. John Goldman, an infectious disease specialist for UPMC Pinnacle, said he doubts flu cases will rise substantially from the present level. That would be a big contrast from last year, when the wave of cases was much more powerful and lasted into March.

<https://www.pennlive.com/news/2019/01/flu-cases-climb-again-although-central-pa-watcher-still-sees-hope-for-mild-season.html>

Number of flu deaths has doubled over the past week

In Ireland, the number of people who have died from flu this season has more than doubled in the last week, the Health Service Executive has confirmed. Dr John Cuddihy, HSE director of public health, said in a briefing for reporters on Thursday that there had been 55 admissions to intensive care units and 21 deaths in the season to date. There had been nine fatalities from flu as of last week.

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/health/number-of-flu-deaths-has-doubled-over-the-past-week-1.3769766>

Flu Surveillance in Animals

A \$4 Million Problem: Fixing The Georgia Poultry Laboratory

At a joint budget hearing before state legislators Wednesday, Agriculture Commissioner Gary Black

explained that the department needs \$4 million to fix a poorly-designed part of the Georgia Poultry Laboratory in Hall County. The Georgia Poultry Laboratory handles diagnostic testing for the poultry industry, and the highly sensitive laboratory affected handles things like avian influenza. The building cost about \$14 million and opened in January 2015.

<https://www.wabe.org/a-4-million-problem-fixing-the-georgia-poultry-laboratory/>

Hub formed to combat animal-to-human diseases

Experts in animal-to-human diseases have announced the launch of the UKRI GCRF One Health Poultry Hub. Professor Munir Iqbal, Head of the Avian Influenza Virus research group at The Pirbright Institute, is among the international experts in animal-to-human diseases that have formed The One Health Poultry Hub.

<https://www.smallholder.co.uk/news/17378164.hub-formed-to-combat-animal-to-human-diseases/>

Avian Cholera Kills Thousands Of Birds In Salton Sea

On Tuesday, Jan. 22, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife reported that they have collected thousands of carcasses of dead birds from the south end of the Salton Sea. While the agency burned most of the carcasses, they shipped several samples to the CDFW Wildlife Investigations Lab in Rancho Cordova, which showed that the birds were infected with avian cholera.

<https://www.techtimes.com/articles/237809/20190123/avian-cholera-kills-thousands-of-birds-in-salton-sea.htm>

In Thailand, tracking animal health to prevent human disease

Viruses like Avian flu, Ebola and Marburg often fester in animals before moving into human populations. Animals in regions that are geographically remote present particular challenges for disease containment. But in Thailand, local residents are using technology, including digital scanning, to track animals and stop outbreaks before they start

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/in-thailand-tracking-animal-health-to-prevent-outbreaks-of-human-disease>