

Seqirus Media Monitoring

31st Jan 2020

Seqirus mentions

No News Recorded

Industry News

Influenza Treatments in the Pipeline

Edina Avdic, PharmD, MBA, BCPS-AQ ID, discusses 2 investigational influenza treatments for pharmacists to keep an eye on. "So, there are 2 other agents that are currently investigational for the treatment of influenza. Those are pimodivir, which is a polymerase complex inhibitor. [It is] similar to baloxavir, which inhibits the viral cell replication. That agent, however, is only active against influenza A, not against influenza B, and is being investigated both as an IV and PO formulation. The other agent also works on the polymerase complex, again, similar area as baloxavir, which inhibits viral cell replication. And that agent is also being investigated as an IV and PO formulation, and it's active against both influenza A and B. It is currently FDA-approved in Japan for use in avian influenza that is resistant to oseltamivir."

<https://www.pharmacytimes.com/interviews/influenza-treatments-in-the-pipeline>

Pandemic Influenza News

We've Had a Lot of Pandemics Lately. Have We Learned Anything From Them?

On Wednesday, China confirmed that almost 6,000 people have been infected with the new coronavirus scientists are calling 2019-nCoV. The progress of 2019-nCoV, as witnessed via media, feels both scary and familiar. As the 21st century moves forward, and we lose all sense of time and space, one pandemic panic seems to merge into another. In a 2019 piece about the legacy of H5N1, Stat's Helen Branswell wrote that the reasons for the dissipation of this strain aren't completely understood. H5N1 may have simply mutated into other "bird flu" viruses that are highly pathogenic to both wild and domestic avian populations, but less dangerous to humans—for now. In 2015, the American poultry industry suffered through an outbreak of H5N8 and H5N2 in large chicken flocks in the Midwest; this outbreak, which the USDA linked to migration routes, did not cross over to humans. As recently as November 2019, crows that died en masse in India tested positive for H5N1.

<https://slate.com/human-interest/2020/01/coronavirus-outbreak-sars-swine-flu-viral-history.html>

Is the coronavirus outbreak as bad as SARS or the 2009 influenza pandemic? A biologist explains the clues

The severity and mortality of a novel emerging virus, which we scientists in this case are calling 2019-nCoV, are very difficult to judge when new data are coming in on a daily basis. During the 2009 influenza pandemic, the earliest reports listed 59 deaths from approximately 850 suspected cases, which suggested an extremely high case fatality of 7%. However, the initially reported information of 850 cases was a gross underestimate. This was simply due to a much larger number of mild cases that did not report to any health system and were not counted. After several months – when pandemic data had been collected from many countries experiencing an epidemic wave – the 2009 influenza turned out to be much milder than was thought in the initial weeks. Its case fatality was lower than 0.1% and in line with other known human influenza viruses.

<http://theconversation.com/is-the-coronavirus-outbreak-as-bad-as-sars-or-the-2009-influenza-pandemic-a-biologist-explains-the-clues-130766>

Data suggest nCoV more infectious than 1918 flu, but what does that mean?

Research published late yesterday in The New England Journal of Medicine offers another estimate of the R-nought (R0) value—a measure of infectiousness—of the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) that has sickened more than 8,000 people and suggests the virus is more infectious than the 1918 influenza pandemic virus. Marc Lipsitch, PhD, a professor of epidemiology and the director of the Center for Communicable Disease Dynamics at Harvard University, warned that a higher R0 than the 1918 flu pandemic does not necessarily mean nCoV will ultimately cause more severe illnesses or deaths

<http://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2020/01/data-suggest-ncov-more-infectious-1918-flu-what-does-mean>

Academic studies

New research establishes how first exposure to flu virus sets on our immunity for life

Were you born in an H1N1 year or an H3N2 year? The first type of influenza virus we are exposed to in early childhood dictates our ability to fight the flu for the rest of our lives, according to a new study from a team of infectious disease researchers at McMaster University and Université de Montréal. The findings, published in the journal Clinical Infectious Diseases, provide compelling new evidence to support the phenomenon known as 'antigenic imprinting', which suggests that early exposure to one of the two flu strains that circulate every year imprints itself on our immunity and disproportionately affects the body's lifelong response to the flu. This could have important implications for pandemic and epidemic planning

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-01-exposure-flu-virus-immunity-life.html>

Additional sources: (Eurekalert)

Rapid weather swings increase flu risk

New research from a team of Florida State University scientists shows that rapid weather variability as a result of climate change could increase the risk of a flu epidemic in some highly populated regions in the late 21st century. The research was published in the journal Environmental Research Letters. The issue going forward, scientists noted, is that rapid weather variability is common in warming climates. Having a better understanding of those weather patterns may be key to determining the severity of any future flu season threat. If these climate models are correct, there is an anticipation of increased flu risk in highly populated areas. Under this scenario, Europe could see a 50 percent increase in deaths tied to flu.

<https://phys.org/news/2020-01-rapid-weather-flu.html>

Additional sources: (Eurekalert)

Pediatric influenza news

Fall in 2-3 year old's getting free flu vaccine

In England, Public Health Dorset are urging anyone who's eligible to get their flu jab. They say the number of 2 to 3-year-olds getting their free vaccine across the south west is lower than usual. There's still time to get your jab, and it only takes a couple of minutes. Cllr Lesley Dedman BCP Council Portfolio Holder for Adults and Health said: "We are still in flu season so it isn't too late to get your flu jab. It is important to keep yourself and loved ones protected from flu.

<https://www.wessexfm.com/news/dorset-news/3033932/fall-in-2-3-year-olds-getting-free-flu-vaccine/>

A model of influenza infection and vaccination in children aged under 5 years in Beijing, China.

Children aged under 5 years are particularly vulnerable to influenza infection. In this study, we aim to estimate the number and incidence of influenza among young children and estimate the impact of childhood vaccination in different scenarios from 2013/14 to 2016/17 seasons.: The number and incidence rate of influenza infections among children aged under 5 years in Beijing was estimated by scaling up observed surveillance data. Then, we used a susceptible-exposed-infected-recovery

(SEIR) model to reproduce the weekly number of influenza infections estimated in Beijing during the study seasons, and to estimate the number and proportion of influenza-attributed medically attended acute respiratory infections (I-MAARI) averted by vaccination in each season. Finally, we evaluated the impact of alternative childhood vaccination programs with different coverage and speed of vaccine distribution

<https://www.physiciansweekly.com/a-model-of-influenza-infection-and-vaccination-in-children-aged-under-5-years-in-beijing-china/>

Over 65's influenza news

Not too late for flu jab say Redditch Docs - and look out for the elderly

In England, the cold snap has sparked appeals for people to take care of themselves, their families and neighbours. Older people, those with chronic health conditions and people who have a disability, are particularly at risk. For protection against flu, those eligible, including carers in other vulnerable groups, can still take advantage of a free flu vaccination.

<https://redditchstandard.co.uk/news/not-too-late-for-flu-jab-say-redditch-docs-and-look-out-for-the-elderly/>

General Influenza News

Worried About Catching The New Coronavirus? In The U.S., Flu Is A Bigger Threat

So far, the only people infected with the new strain of coronavirus in the U.S. have been those who have traveled to the region in China where the virus first turned up in humans. And though that could change, one thing is for certain: Another severe respiratory virus that threatens lives — the flu virus — is very active in the U.S. right now. Already this flu season the CDC estimates that more than 15 million people in the U.S. have gotten sick with flu. More than 150,000 Americans have been hospitalized, and more than 8,000 people have died from their infection. And, this isn't even a particularly bad flu year.

<https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2020/01/29/800813299/worried-about-catching-the-new-coronavirus-in-the-u-s-flu-is-a-bigger-threat>

Additional sources: (U.S. News & World Report)

A deadly virus is spreading from state to state and has infected 15 million Americans so far. It's influenza

The novel coronavirus that's sickening thousands globally is inspiring countries to close their borders and Americans to buy up surgical masks quicker than major retailers can restock them. There's another virus that has infected 15 million Americans across the country and killed more than 8,200 people this season alone. It's not a new pandemic -- it's influenza. The flu is a constant in Americans' lives. It's that familiarity that makes it more dangerous to underestimate, said Dr. Margot Savoy, chair of Family and Community Medicine at Temple University's Lewis Katz School of Medicine. The CDC reported at least 173 million flu vaccine doses have been administered this flu season so far -- that's about 4 million more doses than the manufacturers who make the vaccines projected to provide this season. Still, there are some who decide skipping the vaccine is worth the risk

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/01/30/health/flu-deadly-virus-15-million-infected-trnd/index.html>

Coronavirus Is No Ebola, and That Presents a Different Problem

In an epidemiological twist of fate, the coronavirus's mildness may help it spread undetected until it hits the most vulnerable people. Experts are concerned that it could find a devastating "sweet spot"—mild enough that some patients will go about their normal routines and spread the virus far and wide, triggering an increase in deaths. And if some patients may spread the virus when they have mild or no symptoms at all, as Chinese officials have asserted, that would undercut efforts to halt transmission. The coronavirus has been compared to the flu, which every year infects 10 million to 50 million people in the U.S., leaving tens of thousands of people dead. It's a mild-mannered serial killer. The aggressive response to the coronavirus is meant to stop the new pathogen from

becoming a deadlier copycat.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-01-29/viral-sweet-spot-raises-fears-coronavirus-will-be-hard-to-stop>

'Real and present': Risk from influenza is far greater than coronavirus, health experts warn

A lot of attention has focused on Chinese health officials' efforts to halt the spread of a new coronavirus that has killed more than 130 people in China and sickened thousands of people worldwide since last month. But there is another virus that already has made its way into the general population, sickening 15 million people and killing 8,200 others in the U.S. alone since Oct. 1. It is the flu. "Influenza is going to cause thousands more hospitalizations and I'm afraid many, many deaths that will make the coronavirus impact on our country very tiny in comparison," said Dr. William Schaffner, an infectious disease specialist at Vanderbilt University. "In comparison to influenza, the risk is trivial. The risk from influenza is real and present."

<https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2020/jan/29/flu-risk-far-greater-coronavirus-health-experts-wa/>

For now, the flu is a bigger risk than coronavirus

For most Americans, the risk of getting sick or dying from influenza is much greater than the risk from coronavirus. A lot of people are so complacent about the flu that they won't take even the simplest precautions. Only about 45% of adults get the flu vaccine, which is cheap, readily available and has few side effects. When a new disease pops up with an exotic name — HIV, Ebola, SARS, MERS — we pay attention. One doctor joked to Kaiser Health's reporter that the flu should be rebranded: "We should rename influenza; call it XZ-47 virus, or something scarier." The scariest thing about a pandemic is that there's very little individuals can do to protect themselves beyond the usual nostrums about hand washing and avoiding crowds. We must rely on the kindness and competence of strangers, because taming a pandemic requires a high level of trust, cooperation, preparation and expert health care.

<https://www.marketwatch.com/story/for-now-the-flu-is-a-bigger-risk-than-coronavirus-2020-01-30>

Coronavirus vs. flu: Health officials say influenza is a bigger threat to Arizona

The flu is on the rise in Arizona. So far this season, nearly 15,000 cases of influenza have been reported statewide -- people ages 5 to 49 are the most affected. "Arizona has had a significant influenza season this year and it's concerning because we know influenza kills tens of thousands of Americans every single year," Dr. Cara Christ said. Dr. Christ with the state department of health says influenza cases continue to pop up across the state, a much more severe scenario than the coronavirus.

<https://www.fox10phoenix.com/news/coronavirus-vs-flu-health-officials-say-influenza-is-a-bigger-threat-to-arizona>

Canadians should be concerned about influenza, not coronavirus, expert says

While many people are focused on the threat of the coronavirus in Wuhan, China, medical experts say seasonal influenza poses a much greater concern for those in North America. Alberta Health Services says another patient who was admitted to hospital for treatment of influenza died this past week. The patient, in the Central Zone, is the 20th person to die in the province this season because of the illness.

https://calgary.ctvnews.ca/canadians-should-be-concerned-about-influenza-not-coronavirus-expert-says-1.4790828?c_ache=yes%3FclipId%3D64268%3FclipId%3D89531%3FclipId%3D86116

Coronavirus precautions the same as the flu, says Halifax expert

In Canada, an infectious disease specialist with the Nova Scotia Health Authority says they're ready to deal with the coronavirus, but the risk remains low. So far, just one person in the province has been tested for the virus, and the result was negative. "People in Nova Scotia are more at risk for normal human viruses than they are for this particular virus," said Dr. Todd Hatchette, the service chief of microbiology. He noted that since December, there have been 70 cases of the flu in Nova

Scotia, but only three cases of coronavirus in Canada.

<https://ca.news.yahoo.com/coronavirus-precautions-same-flu-says-200456733.html>

More than 2,000 frontline staff at King George and Queen's hospitals do not have flu jab

In England, more than 2,000 doctors, nurses and other frontline staff at Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals Trust (BHRUT) have not had a flu jab to protect themselves and their patients, new figures reveal. The Society for Acute Medicine says it is concerning that many NHS staff across England who deal with patients have not been vaccinated. David Amos, BHRUT's director of people and organisation development, said: "We continue to actively encourage our staff to be vaccinated because we know it protects our patients, especially those who are most vulnerable."

<https://www.ilfordrecorder.co.uk/news/health/thousands-of-bhrut-staff-have-not-had-flu-vaccination-1-6489017>

DCH staff flu jab uptake among England's best

Dorset County Hospital have one of England's best records for giving flu jabs to their staff. The hospital ranked 19th out of 235 trusts across England, with a flu jab uptake of 82% among frontline staff between 1st September and 31st December 2019. 2,035 doctors, nurses and other frontline staff at DCH Trust were vaccinated by the end of December. This made the trust well above the national average of 68.3%.

<https://www.wessexfm.com/news/dorset-news/3034912/dch-staff-flu-jab-uptake-among-englands-best/>

UMSOM experts call for influenza vaccinations to prevent outbreaks in U.S. border detention centers

Over the past year, at least seven children have died from diseases including influenza while being detained by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Customs and Border Protection agency. Infectious disease experts at the University of Maryland School of Medicine called for protections like influenza vaccinations to prevent serious outbreaks. "The logistics of vaccine administration are relatively straightforward. Influenza vaccine is simple to administer and carries a low risk of adverse effects. In the event that a detainee has previously been immunized, there is no drawback to receiving multiple vaccinations," they said.

<https://www.news-medical.net/news/20200130/UMSOM-experts-call-for-influenza-vaccinations-to-prevent-outbreaks-in-US-border-detention-centers.aspx>

Burden of disease

France - Seasonal flu has already killed 22 people

In France, the latest official figures show that the flu epidemic is still spreading, and that 22 people have died as a result of the virus. Three-quarters of the serious flu infection cases reported were in people belonging to 'at-risk' categories, and three quarters of them were unvaccinated. All regions bar one are at epidemic levels now, and there was a notable increase in emergency rooms visits linked to the flu

https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2020/01/30/la-grippe-saisonniere-a-deja-fait-22-morts-en-france_6027761_3224.html

Additional sources: (FranceInfo)

Belgium - The flu is back and expected to infect 5 to 10% of people

In Belgium, the flu became officially epidemic last week. Every year around 500,000 Belgians catch the virus, but this varies according to the intensity of the epidemic. This year it could infect between 5 and 10% of the population

https://www.levif.be/actualite/sante/la-grippe-est-de-retour-elle-touchera-entre-5-et-10-des-belges/article-news-1246081.html?cookie_check=1580431590

Luxembourg - The flu raises the temperature across the country

In Luxembourg, the flu is now very active according to official data. There was a notable jump in consultations for influenza like illness around mid January. The worst is usually seen in February. It isn't too late to get vaccinated, and this year there are plenty of supplies

<https://www.wort.lu/fr/luxembourg/la-grippe-met-la-fievre-au-pays-5e319dccda2cc1784e354fec>

Connecticut Sees Spike In Number Of Flu Cases

Cases of the flu spiked statewide in Connecticut, with more than 250 people hospitalized and three more deaths in the past week. According to the Department of Health, the flu is currently “widespread” statewide, with a total of 1,036 influenza-related hospitalizations reported since the beginning of the flu season. As of Saturday, Jan. 25, there has been a total of 23 deaths reported, all from residents over the age of 65.

<https://dailyvoice.com/connecticut/fairfield/news/connecticut-sees-spike-in-number-of-flu-cases/782648/>

Additional sources: (Connecticut Post)

Flu-related deaths in NC on track to surpass last season’s total with 9 more reported

Nine more flu-related deaths have been reported in North Carolina, bringing the state total to 54, health officials reported Thursday. North Carolina is on pace to surpass the number of flu-related deaths last season. At this time last year, 31 flu-related deaths had been reported in the state. There were a total of 203 flu-related deaths last season.

<https://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/state/north-carolina/article239792083.html>

Another 6 deaths from flu reported in Arkansas; some schools off as illness spreads

Six more flu deaths were reported to Arkansas' Department of Health in the past week as at least five school districts canceled classes for one or more days because of the high level of illness among students and teachers. The latest deaths brought the toll from the season to 33. The latest deaths in Arkansas were of three people 65 or older and three people 45-64.

<https://www.nwaonline.com/news/2020/jan/30/another-six-deaths-from-flu-reported-20/>

High levels of influenza reported again in Nebraska

Every state except Oregon and Hawaii currently has widespread influenza activity. Dr. Tom Safranek, State Epidemiologist with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services says the virus had calmed down in the state, but has now come back strong again as Influenza B instead of Influenza A. Safranek says if you haven't gotten a flu vaccine yet, you're still encouraged to get one

https://norfolkdailynews.com/wjag/news/high-levels-of-influenza-reported-again-in-nebraska/article_0e500dea-42e9-11ea-9433-1b29da98b79a.html

Family of man who died of flu in prison sues for \$15 million

A \$15 million lawsuit filed by the family of a man who died at the Oregon State Penitentiary accuses prison staff of failing to treat the 54-year-old inmate for flu and then covering up his flu-related death. The Statesman Journal reports that Michael Barton, of Medford, Oregon, was already experiencing mental illness and dementia when he came down with the flu in January 2018. According to the lawsuit, he did not receive a flu vaccine at the prison in 2018 or in 2017

<https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2020/jan/30/family-of-man-who-died-of-flu-in-prison-sues-for-1/>

Flu Surveillance in Animals

Bird flu: Central team takes stock of situation

A three-member Central team has taken stock of the bird flu situation in the Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology (OUAT) in India. The team will continue to monitor the situation for 10 days, and told people not to panic as the situation is under control. The culling of poultry birds within 1 km of epicentre of infection has been completed. “Though no human being has so far been infected in the bird flu across the country, we are taking precautionary measure and screening the

health condition of people living in the surveillance zone,” said Mohanty.

<https://www.dailypioneer.com/2020/state-editions/bird-flu--central-team-takes-stock-of-situation.html>