

Seqirus Media Monitoring

23rd Mar 2020

Seqirus mentions

Flu shot urged amid coronavirus crisis

Health experts are urging Australians to get their flu shot this year to stop burdening hospitals likely to be strained with coronavirus patients. One of the nation's largest suppliers of flu vaccine formula is assuring people it has plenty of stock for everyone. But Seqirus senior medical director Jonathan Anderson warned the flu shot was not a cure for coronavirus. "We want to try and keep people as healthy as possible to avoid them being at risk of other other complications," Dr Anderson told AAP. "We would also want to make sure that we don't get confusion when people get the flu, that people might think that they've got coronavirus."

<https://www.standard.net.au/story/6689254/flu-shot-urged-amid-coronavirus-crisis/?cs=10259>

Additional sources: (Mandurah Mail) (Community Newspaper Group)

UK lacks ability to mass produce coronavirus vaccine, experts warn

The UK has the scientific knowledge but not the manufacturing capability to mass produce a coronavirus vaccine, experts have warned. Around the world there are clinical trials of coronavirus vaccines in the pipeline, with the World Health Organisation citing at least 20 vaccines in development and some laboratories hoping to have an immunisation ready for regulatory scrutiny in time for the end of the year. Oxford University researchers are working on a coronavirus vaccine with testing on animals already underway at the government's science centre in Porton Down. But experts have warned that while the UK is a leader in vaccine science, it is severely lacking in manufacturing facilities to mass produce the vaccines

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/03/21/uk-lacks-ability-mass-produce-coronavirus-vaccine-experts-warn/>

Flu epidemic - Decrease in cases in European region

The WHO reported that in the week 9th-15th March, there was a decrease in flu activity in the European region, for the 4th week in a row, despite levels remaining high. Both influenza A and B are circulating, and the presence of Covid-19 might mean an increase in people looking for a diagnostic and testing when exhibiting flu-like symptoms. WHO has released the composition needed for flu vaccines for the 2020-21 season, relevant to various vaccines including Flucelvax Tetra which should be available for the first time in France in the upcoming flu season

<https://www.mesvaccins.net/web/news/15313-l-epidemie-de-grippe-dans-la-region-europeenne-est-en-decroissance>

Is the CSL share price a buy after the coronavirus volatility?

CSL has previously said that because this coronavirus is quite different to the influenza virus it's not a core area of focus for CSL or Seqirus, though it is looking into "possible adjacencies in expertise, technologies and facilities that might be able to contribute to the global effort." It has partnered with the University of Queensland's COVID-19 vaccine development program. It will provide technical expertise as well as a donation of Seqirus' proprietary adjuvant technology to their pre-clinical development program. However, the research program is just starting and it will be some months before the success of the program will be known.

<https://www.fool.com.au/2020/03/21/is-the-csl-share-price-a-buy-after-the-coronavirus-volatility/>

Industry News

Universal Flu Vaccine Candidate Shows Protection in New Trial

The National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) has shared promising results from an efficacy trial investigating an experimental universal flu vaccine. The experimental vaccine, FLU-v, decreased the chance that participants would develop flu symptoms and viral shedding. The trial was conducted by administering either a placebo injection or 1 or 2 doses of the experimental vaccine to healthy volunteers. Volunteers were then exposed to a seasonal influenza strain under controlled conditions.

<https://www.contagionlive.com/news/universal-flu-vaccine-candidate-shows-protection-in-new-trial>

Additional sources: ([Health24](#))

Why the push for a quick coronavirus vaccine could backfire

President Donald Trump has pledged to “slash red tape like nobody has even done it before” to accelerate the development of a coronavirus vaccine. But his push could backfire if the government moves too fast, according to public health officials and scientists with decades of experience in the field. In some cases, a vaccine that hasn’t been properly tested could make people sicker. And if there are complications, the public relations problems could mount, spurring an anti-vaccination sentiment. There are several examples of how fast-tracking vaccines can backfire. A massive campaign to vaccinate against the 1976 swine flu flopped when the disease turned out to be mild, but hundreds of people suffered a rare nerve disorder after vaccination. And a vaccine used in some European countries against H1N1 flu in 2009 caused some people to develop narcolepsy.

<https://www.politico.com/news/2020/03/20/why-the-push-for-a-quick-coronavirus-vaccine-could-backfire-139854>

Flu fighter Avigan gets coronavirus call after 30 years in bullpen

Three days after Beijing endorsed the Japan-developed flu drug Avigan as a treatment for COVID-19, Indonesia is importing millions of doses to treat its patients, President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo said. Avigan has suddenly drawn global attention after Chinese medical authorities suggested it was effective in treating the new coronavirus. But behind its rise is a three-decade struggle marked by twists and turns, according to interviews with people involved in its development. That history may be both a blessing and a curse for its producer, Toyama Chemical

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Business/Pharmaceuticals/Flu-fighter-Avigan-gets-coronavirus-call-after-30-years-in-bullpen2>

The pandemic pipeline

Companies are doing their best to accelerate experimental drugs and vaccines for COVID-19 through the pipeline. Each faces its own set of challenges, but all agree on the need for a radical rethink of the clinical development process for pandemics. A host of therapeutic modalities are being accelerated through discovery and development. Approved small molecules are already in use off label as adjunct therapies for critically ill patients (like Fujifilm Toyama Chemical’s favipiravir), with several other experimental drugs (like Gilead’s remdesivir) under investigation.

<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41587-020-00005-z>

Pandemic Influenza News

Coronavirus: we should have learnt from Sars, not swine flu

Niall Ferguson is the Milbank Family senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford. He writes about the expected death toll on the older population from Covid-19: "when this pandemic has run its course — when we have achieved “herd immunity” as a species and when vaccines and therapies have been devised — there will have been a lot more funerals for elderly Italians and, very probably, Americans and Britons than for Taiwanese or South Koreans. And the reason for this discrepancy will not be bad luck. The reason will be that east Asian countries drew the right conclusions from the searing experiences of Sars in 2003, while most western countries drew the wrong conclusions from their relatively mild encounter with H1N1, commonly known as swine flu, in 2009."

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/coronavirus-we-should-have-learnt-from-sars-not-swine-flu-p2rh3nnfh>

Compare: 2009 H1N1 Pandemic Versus the 2020 Coronavirus Pandemic

The H1N1 influenza pandemic of 2009 was caused by a virus from a different family of viruses than the current coronavirus outbreak. The virus in the 2009 pandemic is considered to be quite different from the typical H1N1 viruses that were circulating at the time. Dubbed (H1N1)pdm09, very few young people had existing immunity to it, but about one-third of people over 60 years of age had antibodies against it, probably from exposure to other, older H1N1 viruses at some time in their lives. This also meant that vaccinations for seasonal influenza offered very little protection against it. A vaccine for the (H1N1)pdm09 vaccine was manufactured, but was not available in significant quantities until late November, well after the peak of the illness in the second wave of the disease and finished in the U.S.

<https://www.biospace.com/article/2009-h1n1-pandemic-versus-the-2020-coronavirus-pandemic/>

Academic studies

Subtype diversity of influenza A virus in North American waterfowl: a multi-decade study.

The discovery in 1976 of waterfowl as the primary reservoir of influenza A viruses (IAV) has since spurred decades of waterfowl surveillance efforts by researchers dedicated to understanding the ecology of IAV and its subsequent threat to human and animal health. Here, researchers employed a multi-decade, continental-scale approach of surveillance data to understand trends of seasonal IAV subtype diversity. Their findings allow improvements to surveillance efforts to robustly capture IAV diversity that will be used for vaccine development and cultivate a more thorough understanding of IAV evolution and persistence mechanisms

<https://www.physiciansweekly.com/subtype-diversity-of-influenza-a-virus-in-north-american-waterfowl-a-multi-decade-study/>

Pediatric influenza news

Pharmacists can now vaccinate children from 10 years of age

In Australia, the NSW Government has enabled pharmacists to administer flu vaccinations to children from ten years of age. NSW Health Minister, Brad Hazzard, said giving families more options to protect their children against flu is sensible, with the likely convergence of a COVID-19 pandemic with winter flu. "While the flu vaccine won't combat COVID-19, it will help reduce the severity and spread of flu, which can lower a person's immunity and make them susceptible to other illnesses. By allowing pharmacists to administer privately purchased flu vaccines to people aged 10 years and over, families now have more choice when booking-in for a flu jab," he added.

<https://coastcommunitynews.com.au/central-coast/news/2020/03/pharmacists-can-now-vaccinate-children-from-10-years-of-age/>

Over 65's influenza news

Flu vaccine vital amid potential outbreak: Green

In New Zealand, the risk that flu season coincides with the Covid-19 outbreak means Tairāwhiti cannot afford to have low vaccination rates this year, Hauora Tairāwhiti district health board boss Jim Green says. Traditionally, about 60 percent of Gisborne pensioners get a free flu shot, but Mr Green said that vaccination rate would be too low this year.

<http://www.gisborneherald.co.nz/local-news/20200321/flu-vaccine-vital-amid-potential-outbreak-green/>

General Influenza News

COVID-19 Is Deadlier Than The Flu. How Else Do They Differ?

The fact that the novel coronavirus appeared in the middle of flu season has prompted inevitable comparisons. Is COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus, pretty much similar to the flu or does it pose a far greater threat? Although there are still many unknowns about COVID-19, there is some

solid information from researchers that sheds light on some of the similarities and differences at this time. For flu, which has been studied intensively, doctors have some additional tools to fight it, says Dr. Meghan Freeman, an infectious disease fellow at the UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh. Tamiflu aims to stop the flu virus from replicating in the body and can lessen the severity of symptoms. Other treatments that prime the body's immune system are in development.

<https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/03/20/815408287/how-the-novel-coronavirus-and-the-flu-are-alike-and-different>

Additional sources: (ABC News) (MarketWatch) (Penn Live)

Coronavirus: Huge uptake for influenza vaccinations in South Canterbury

In South Canterbury, NZ, the uptake for influenza vaccinations in the region has been "huge" since their early introduction on Wednesday. Nearly half a million additional influenza vaccinations have been rolled out two weeks early by the Government in the hope of keeping hospital beds free for coronavirus. The first-day of a one-week drop in clinic which began on Thursday saw 40 per cent of South Canterbury District Health Board staff receive influenza vaccinations.

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/timaru-herald/news/120444924/coronavirus-huge-uptake-for-influenza-vaccinations-in-south-canterbury>

WHO officials warn health systems are 'collapsing' under coronavirus: 'This isn't just a bad flu season'

World Health Organization officials warned Friday against dismissing the coronavirus that's swept across the globe as just a bad outbreak of the flu, saying it has overwhelmed health systems around the world in just a few weeks.

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/20/coronavirus-who-says-health-systems-collapsing-this-isnt-just-a-bad-flu-season.html>

'It's just the flu' remark undermines how seriously influenza should be taken

As the coronavirus pandemic began to take hold, a common refrain and misconception was that it resembles the seasonal flu. But the coronavirus is more deadly and experts say a vaccine could be more than a year away. Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, has said the coronavirus is 10 times more deadly than seasonal influenza. However, the "regular" flu is nothing to take lightly, something that is stressed by the nonprofit organization Families Fighting Flu.

https://www.nny360.com/artsandlife/mindandbody/it-s-just-the-flu-remark-undermines-how-seriously-influenza/article_e5f66c33-9e87-598d-aa75-471a722cb9fb.html

Flu-like trends detected from coughing crowds

University of Massachusetts-Amherst scientists have created a portable device which can detect coughing and crowd size, and analyse this data to monitor trends in flu-like illnesses. The platform, which is called 'FluSense', uses machine learning to detect patterns from the data it collects. It is intended for use in hospitals and medical waiting rooms, as well as in larger public spaces.

<https://eandt.theiet.org/content/articles/2020/03/flu-like-trends-detected-from-coughing-crowds/>

Additional sources: (The Engineer)

Cotton swab shortage halts flu testing at many metro clinics

In Minnesota, the shortage of materials for coronavirus testing is forcing a number of hospitals and clinics to halt most flu testing as well, hospital officials said. It's the swabs. Those extra-long Q-tip-looking things used to collect samples from patients. They're needed for both COVID-19 and flu. And there aren't enough of them. Allina Health and HealthPartners, two major Twin Cities operators of hospitals and clinics, have both curtailed flu testing to conserve the swabs for COVID-19 testings, officials said. They noted that they're aware of other health care providers taking similar measures

<https://www.twincities.com/2020/03/19/mn-coronavirus-flu-testing-ceases-twin-cities-clinics-swab/>

Burden of disease

Coronavirus: Swine flu piles more pressure on Shetland's health system

Shetland, the area of the UK worst affected by coronavirus, has also been hit by an outbreak of swine flu, heaping further pressure on its health services. With 24 confirmed coronavirus cases the islands, which have no intensive care facilities and a population of 20,000, have the highest rate of the condition per head of population of anywhere in the British isles. Susan Laidlaw, a public health consultant with NHS Shetland, confirmed there had also been an outbreak of H1N1 or swine flu. A regular flu jab can protect people from the strain and the symptoms usually pass within a fortnight. However, in severe cases it can prove to be fatal for the elderly, infants, pregnant women and people with chronic diseases such as diabetes, asthma, emphysema or a heart condition.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/coronavirus-swine-flu-piles-more-pressure-on-shetlands-health-system-kf7cv77b9>

News Scan for Mar 20, 2020 - Uptick in US visits for flulike illness

There was a sharp uptick last week in US clinic visits for influenza-like illness, according to the latest FluView report from the CDC, but officials say that could reflect more people seeking care for respiratory illness as COVID-19 spreads across the country. While the percentage of respiratory specimens testing positive for influenza at clinical laboratories decreased from 21.1% to 15.3% last week, visits to healthcare providers for ILI jumped from 5.2% to 5.8%, with all regions of the country above their baselines. "Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, more people may be seeking care for respiratory illness than usual at this time," the CDC said.

<http://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2020/03/news-scan-mar-20-2020>

US flu activity up, death toll reaches 23K

Flu-like activity is up in the United States this week, but its severity is moderate to low overall, the CDC reported Friday. The CDC estimates that so far this season there have been at least 23,000 deaths from flu, 38 million flu illnesses and 390,000 hospitalizations. Compared to recent years, hospitalization rates for flu-related cases in the United States are moderate, but young children and young adults are a different story.

<https://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/2020/03/20/us-flu-activity-up-death-toll-reaches-k/>

Eleven More Deaths From Influenza In Minnesota

The Minnesota Department of Health says they are still tracking the latest influenza numbers even amid the COVID-19 outbreak. Numbers for the week ending March 14th: There were 121 influenza-related deaths, up 11 from the week ending March 7th. Three children have also died from influenza-related complications. Statewide, there were 177 hospitalizations versus 326 reported for the week ending March 7th.

<https://knsradio.com/news/local-news/eleven-more-death-flu-minnesota>

State's flu season death toll climbs to 96

In Arkansas, ten more people, including one child, died of the flu in a week-long period ending Tuesday, bringing the state's death toll from the current flu season to 96, the Arkansas Department of Health reported Friday. The child, who was under age 5, was the third to die from the flu this season.

<https://www.arkansasonline.com/news/2020/mar/21/state-s-flu-season-death-toll-climbs-to/>

Influenza Kills 94 in Greece so far This Winter Season

In Greece, some 94 people have lost their lives to seasonal influenza so far this winter season, 4 of them last week, the National Public Health Organization reported on Thursday. Of these, 76 died while under intensive care. Of those who perished, 55 were men, 39 were women, while 87 belonged to high-risk vulnerable groups. Only 34 of these patients had been vaccinated against the flu. The total of advanced flu cases is 241 so far, with 220 hospitalized in ICUs. Only 92 had received

flu shots.

<https://www.thenationalherald.com/292933/influenza-kills-94-in-greece-so-far-this-winter-season/>

Seasonal influenza cases in decline

The rate of influenza and other upper respiratory tract viral infections in Estonia has decreased in the last week, the Health Board said on Friday. Overall morbidity declined by 6 percent in a week, and influenza cases by 10 percent. Between March 9 and 15, a total of 3,472 people were in need of medical treatment for upper respiratory viral infections, 42.7 percent of whom were children. Influenza virus was confirmed in 136 cases, of which 90 were influenza A and 48 were influenza B. Influenza viruses account for 44 percent of other viruses in circulation.

<https://news.err.ee/1066757/seasonal-influenza-cases-in-decline>

Flu Surveillance in Animals

China removes threat of total ban on U.S. poultry if bird flu is found -industry group

China has promised it will not impose a nationwide ban on imports of U.S. poultry if the United States finds cases of avian flu, an industry group said, a policy change that could help Beijing fulfill commitments to buy more American farm goods. The agreement follows a Phase 1 deal to end a prolonged trade war between the world's two largest economies and highlights China's need for more imported meat as it battles a fatal pig disease.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/usa-trade-china-poultry/china-removes-threat-of-total-ban-on-us-poultry-if-bird-flu-is-found-industry-group-idUKL1N2BD1QP>