



Thailand

Pandemic H1N1 Special Issue

Household Transmission Study Aims to Answer H1N1 Questions

Researchers from Queen Sirikit National Institute of Child Health and IEIP will use data from the Household Influenza Transmission Study (HITS) to better understand the epidemiology of the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic and to help improve public health measures for its control in Thailand and other nations.

HITS examines the potential protective effects of hand washing and face mask use in households with a confirmed influenza case. The study will also allow a comparison of the new flu's secondary attack rate with that of seasonal flu. Because early diagnosis increases the benefit of antiviral treatment, HITS also plans to assess the sensitivity of rapid point-of-care testing to detect the pandemic H1N1 virus.

Finally, HITS will provide an improved understanding of the potential role of contaminated household surfaces, such as door knobs and light switches, in the transmission of pandemic influenza. The researchers expect to publish their findings late in 2009.

- Jens Levy

IEIP Provincial Surveillance Sites to Describe Details of Hospitalized H1N1 Pandemic Flu Cases

IEIP and Thailand MOPH are leveraging their pneumonia surveillance sites in Sa Kaeo and Nakhon Phanom Provinces to help characterize the novel H1N1 infection among hospitalized pneumonia patients. More epidemiologic and clinical information is needed, especially from locations where the pandemic virus is striking during the typical seasonal influenza season.

The sites will also use real-time PCR to detect and subtype influenza infections. Such enhanced diagnostic capability is unique for provincial hospital laboratories outside of national or regional centers in Thailand. Clinicians will receive real-time results to guide patient care, while rapid case identification will allow collection of additional clinical and risk factor information from patients before discharge.

Data from the population-based surveillance sites will also be used to describe disease burden in these provinces and to extrapolate estimates for all of Thailand. Data from the IEIP-MOPH collaborative severe and fatal pneumonia project will seek to identify markers for severe disease.

- Kip Baggett

New Inquiry Management System Developed for Novel Outbreaks

Public Inquiry Management System (PIMS) is an inquiry management system (and soon to be launched web-based application) created to respond to phone inquiries. Developed in Thailand as the H1N1 novel flu outbreak began on the opposite side of the world, PIMS allows administrative personnel to input information about caller concerns. Information is then forwarded to triage personnel, who respond and direct the caller to appropriate information resources.

PIMS helps IEIP and its partners to understand the public's concerns, and aids in efficiently responding to public and professional inquiries and providing credible and practical information. Its scale is appropriate to the expected use and can be shared with other countries and adapted to fit local needs.

- Nattakan Limprasert

Laboratory Resources Boosted in Response to Influenza Pandemic

Stepped-up laboratory efforts in the wake of the H1N1 pandemic have provided critical information to the Southeast Asia region, enabling health care providers and public health officials to make informed decisions for response and control.

IEIP, along with CDC Influenza Division, the World Health Organization, and staff from the National Influenza Center of Thailand, have extended support throughout the region to help develop capacity and expertise. Real-time PCR diagnostics for influenza have been established in two rural Thai provinces and are being set up in a third, allowing real-time detection of novel viral strains. Similarly, in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, extensive logistical support and technical expertise provided to the national laboratories has allowed detection and identification of the new influenza strain.

- Len Peruski



"Public health officials are relying on improved data collection to make informed decisions for H1N1 response and control."