H1N1 Influenza (Swine Flu) Update – Saturday, May 2

Despite a burst of media attention surrounding symptomatic passengers on planes who were brought to the MGH Emergency Department and found to not meet the CDC definition for H1N1 influenza, the weekend has gone relatively smoothly regarding the hospital’s flu preparedness and response activities. We want to make sure that MGH staff, especially those caregivers who continue to get questions about H1N1 flu, understand the processes and systems the hospital has in place for handling, screening, processing and reporting. In this communication, we cover the following issues:

- MGH-specific information about H1N1 flu now available on Sharepoint site;
- Updated statistics about H1N1 influenza;
- Harvard Medical campus closure news;
- Central Ambulatory Screening and Testing (CAST) unit hours; and
- Blum Center open this weekend to patients and public.

Sharepoint Site with MGH-Specific Information

We have set up a special Sharepoint site to help MGH staff access various hospital-specific guidelines and information about processes we have put in place to determine who should be tested, how to handle specimens, reporting systems and other helpful information relevant to the activities under way at the hospital. The Sharepoint site can be accessed from any Partners workstation or from external computers that link to the Partners site through a VPN connection. The documents will not be accessible if the connection to Partners is through web access.

Information included on the Sharepoint site includes:
- MGH case definitions for H1N1 influenza
- MGH Occupational Health guidelines
- H1N1 influenza precautions
- MGH H1N1 influenza reporting
- MGH treatment and prophylaxis guidelines
- MGH guidelines for testing for H1N1 influenza
- MGH guidance on how to use nasopharyngeal swabs for obtaining samples
- State Lab form required for testing

The link to this Sharepoint site is [http://swineflu.massgeneral.org](http://swineflu.massgeneral.org). When the box asking for user name and password comes up, access the site by typing “partners\" (do not type the quotation marks) right before your user name, then typing your password in the appropriate place. A link to the Sharepoint site will also be available from the “Swine Flu” entry on the News section of the MGH home page.
H1N1 Statistics Update

As of Saturday afternoon, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention was reporting 160 confirmed cases of H1N1 influenza in 21 states in the United States, with one death. Massachusetts has eight confirmed cases so far. Internationally, a total of 656 H1N1 influenza cases have been confirmed in 16 countries.

Harvard Medical Campus Closure Update

As you may know, the Harvard School of Dental Medicine last Thursday evening reported two probable H1N1 flu cases among its students. In addition, seven other students from the Harvard Medical campus have respiratory illness and fever and have been evaluated. All of the students affected are recovering as they await final results from the CDC. As a precaution, however, Harvard has decided to take the following steps:

- Close the Harvard Dental Center and the Harvard School of Dental Medicine through Wednesday, May 6.
- Cancel Harvard Medical School student educational activities in hospitals and other clinical locations – including all clerkships and other student rotations through the MGH – through Wednesday, May 6.
- Cancel all student activities and classes at Harvard Medical School, including HST classes held at MIT, through Monday, May 4.
- Resume all activities at Harvard School of Public Health Monday, May 4.

Harvard officials will be re-evaluating the situation early next week to decide whether to extend the cancellation of classes and activities or adjust this plan.

Central Ambulatory Testing and Screening (CAST) Unit

The MGH implemented its CAST process last Thursday to provide efficient and safe high-volume H1N1 screening for ambulatory patients referred for evaluation from the Emergency Department, the Medical Walk-In Unit and the MGH practices. Located on Wang 1, the CAST unit will be staffed Sunday, May 3 from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The CAST unit also will be open Monday from 8 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. A decision will be made Monday as to whether to keep the CAST unit open additional days.

Blum Center Staffed this Weekend

At the Blum Patient and Family Learning Center, clinicians have been providing information and responding to questions and concerns about H1N1 influenza throughout the weekend. The center will be open Sunday, May 3 between 9 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. to take calls and distribute information. Information tables will be in the White 1 main hallway during these hours. The number for the Swine Flu Call Center is 617-726-9100.

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