



The Florida ESRD Network

Preparing for the Possibility of a Pandemic-Influenza

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) (2005) estimates that each year approximately 200,000 people are hospitalized and another 36,000 die from seasonal flu virus. Although these numbers may appear startling, death and hospitalizations related to a pandemic flu outbreak would be staggering.

The CDC (2005) defines the different types of flu as:

Seasonal Flu: A contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses.

Avian flu: Also called bird flu and caused by avian influenza viruses, which occur *naturally* among birds. Migratory waterfowl, most notably wild ducks, are the natural host for avian influenza viruses, and these birds are also the most resistant to infection (World Health Organization, 2005).

Pandemic Flu: A flu pandemic is a global outbreak that occurs when a new influenza A virus causes serious human illness and spreads easily from person to person.

Pandemics are different from seasonal outbreaks or “epidemics” of influenza. Seasonal outbreaks are caused by subtypes of influenza viruses that are already in existence among people, whereas pandemic outbreaks are caused by new subtypes or by subtypes that have never circulated among people. Past influenza pandemics have led to high levels of illness, death, social disruption and economic loss. (Avian MD, 2005).

In the event of pandemic influenza, ESRD providers will play a key role in protecting employees’ health and safety as well as limiting the negative impact to the economy, society and the ESRD patient. Planning for pandemic influenza is critical. To assist you in your efforts, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have developed a checklist for ESRD providers. The checklist and further information can be found at:

www.pandemicflu.gov and www.cdc.gov/business

Help your families and patients decrease their risk to flu by washing your hands often, avoiding touching your face, covering your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, and avoiding close contact with individuals who are sick.

FMQAI: The Florida ESRD Network (Network 7) is providing this fax blast as a technical assistance activity for the Florida renal community.