

# PANDEMIC PULSE

Expert Analysis of the Current Pandemic Influenza Threat



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**Global Consulting**

*Emergency Preparedness Specialists*



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## Monthly Feature — After H1N1: Learning from the Pandemic

Even as the second wave of pandemic H1N1 continues to infect people around the world, particularly in parts of Asia, many organizations in North America are already moving on to the next “big” disaster. However, before putting down the pandemic torch entirely, it is important to recognize that an essential part of planning for events like pandemic is an appropriate level of debriefing and recording lessons to be learned from the experiences of all involved stakeholders. Although the possibility of a third wave of H1N1 cannot be discounted, now is the time to conduct such a process.



From their planning assumptions to the use of the World Health Organization’s (WHO) pandemic alert phases, organizations have begun to reflect on what worked during their response, and what could be improved with regards to preparedness. One of the key lessons learned highlights the need for pandemic plans to be more

commensurately scalable to the threat. Some organizations feared the highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N1 would spark a deadly pandemic. Although H1N1 was fatal in some cases, it did not have the high degree of severity that many expected. Other organizations, such as those in health care and critical infrastructure, were able to test a number of their response strategies and emergency communications procedures.

Pandemics, infectious disease threats and disasters in general will continue to arise. Avian influenza H5N1 is still considered a threat by the WHO, and the possibility that other pandemic influenza strains will emerge in the future is without doubt. Organizations that are progressive and learn now from their planning and response deficiencies will be better prepared to face the pandemics of the future, and ensure the safety of their employees and loved ones.

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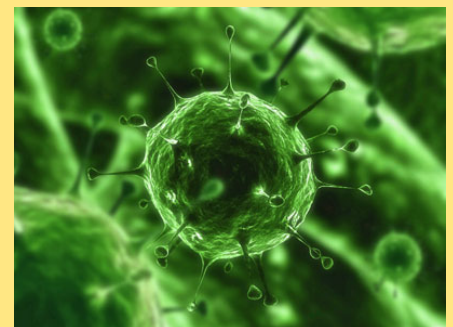
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North American News

Pandemic Pulse

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<http://h1n1flu2009.blogspot.com/>



H1N1 impact greater than 2003 blackout

CBC – 19 January 2010

<http://www.cbc.ca/health/story/2010/01/15/h1n1-economic-impact-hours-worked.html>

Statistics Canada has reported that more than 1.5 million people missed work as a result of the H1N1 or seasonal flu in November. The figure represents roughly nine per cent of the Canadian work force. On average, absentee workers lost 19.6 hours of labour each, for a total of 29.5 million hours lost. The impact was greater than, but comparable to, that of the blackout in August 2003, the data agency said. That power outage cost 2.4 million workers 26.4 million hours of work time. But by way of comparison, a one-week snapshot in November 2008 saw 805,000 Canadians off work sick. During the same week in 2009, there were 1,020,000 Canadians off work due to illness, which included H1N1 and seasonal flu.



Open letter to the American people about the H1N1 flu vaccine

U.S. Centers for Disease Control – 21 January 2010

[http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/open\\_letter\\_h1n1\\_vaccine.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/open_letter_h1n1_vaccine.htm)

Alongside a number of other organizations, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control has issued an open letter to the American people advocating continued vigilance in guarding against influenza infection and urging people to seek H1N1 vaccinations: “The H1N1 flu vaccine is safe, effective, and the best way to protect yourself and your family from the H1N1 flu.” The message, which was co-signed by 37 other American medical organizations including the American Medical Association and the American College of Physicians, goes on to say, “Fighting the flu is a shared responsibility. We ask you to join us in this fight to protect yourself and your community by getting the H1N1 flu vaccine.”





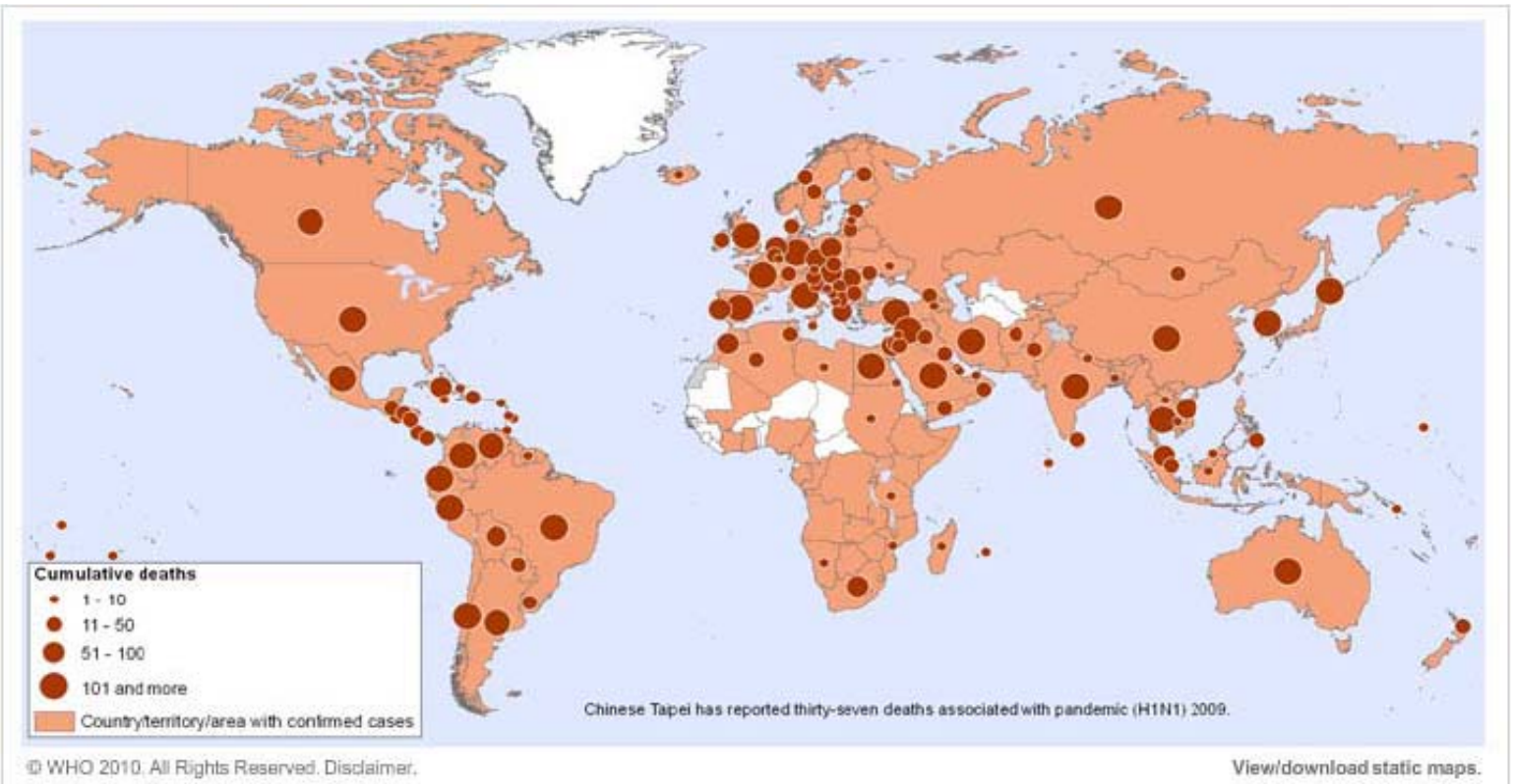
International News

Worldwide Pandemic Update

World Health Organization – 22 January 2010

[http://www.who.int/csr/don/2010\\_01\\_22/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/csr/don/2010_01_22/en/index.html)

The most intense transmission of pandemic influenza virus continues to occur in North Africa, South Asia, and in limited areas of Eastern Europe. Overall pandemic influenza activity in the temperate northern hemisphere peaked between late October and late November 2009, and has continued to decline since. In the Americas, both in the tropical and northern temperate zones, overall pandemic influenza activity continued to decline or remain low in most places. In temperate regions of the southern hemisphere, sporadic cases continue to be reported without evidence of sustained community transmission.



WHO defends pandemic response ahead of Europe hearing

CIDRAP News – 25 January 2010

<http://www.cidrap.umn.edu/cidrap/content/influenza/swineflu/news/jan2510hearing-jw.html>

Just days before a Council of Europe hearing to discuss claims that pharmaceutical companies influenced the World Health Organization's (WHO's) pandemic response, the global body has stated that charges by some European officials that the pandemic is "fake" are "wrong and irresponsible." The WHO said cooperation from a range of partners, including the private sector, is needed to conduct essential public health actions and it has safeguards in place to guard against conflicts of interest. In December a Council of Europe group introduced a resolution asking the council to investigate charges that pharmaceutical companies have pressured countries to waste resources on inefficient immunization campaigns using vaccines that they say haven't been thoroughly tested. The Council, an organization of 47 nations, will conduct a public hearing titled, "The handling of the H1N1 pandemic: more transparency needed?" on the second day of its parliamentary assembly in Strasbourg, France.



Vaccine News

Flu Kits from GMS



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- Pediatric Advanced Life Support (PALS)

Workshops

- Critical Interventions
- Procedural Sedation
- Electrocardiogram Interpretation
- AED – Cardiac Arrest Management

**H1N1 flu numbers down, but still a threat**

**The Vancouver Sun** – 25 January 2010

<http://www.vancouversun.com/health/H1N1+numbers+down+still+threat/2481716/story.html>

Reports from the Public Health Agency of Canada show that, in the first two weeks of January, indicators used to determine influenza levels were normal or even below expectations for this time of year. While the H1N1 virus is still the dominant strain, so far the virus hasn't shifted in its composition. "The indications are that it's not doing too much," said Earl Brown, executive director of the emerging pathogens research at the University of Ottawa. The H1N1 vaccine has been administered to 45 to 50 percent of Canadians and thousands have recovered from infection, which has helped stem the virus' spread, Brown said. "The immunity in the population is probably quite solid so it's going to be hard for this virus to move around in the population."

**Demand for H1N1 vaccine still high on P.E.I.**

**CBC News** – 19 January 2010

<http://www.cbc.ca/health/story/2010/01/19/pei-vaccine-flu-demand-584.html>

With over 60% of its population vaccinated, demand is still high for the H1N1 vaccine in Prince Edward Island with an average of 450 people per day booking appointments to get their shots. Deputy Chief Health Officer Dr. Lamont Sweet speculated that this may be due to people planning vacations saying, "Many of them are going to the Caribbean, Mexico, southern areas, and flu circulates year-round in the tropical areas."

**Mandatory Influenza Vaccination of Health Care Workers: Translating Policy to Practice**

**Clinical Infectious Diseases** – 14 January 2010

<http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/650752>

According to a Clinical Infectious Diseases study, mandatory flu vaccination of staff has been successful at BJC HealthCare, a St. Louis health group with 26,000 workers. After the requirement was set in 2008, 98.4% of workers were vaccinated. Medical exemptions were granted to 1.2% of workers and religious exemptions to 0.3%. Only eight workers were not vaccinated and not exempted. Fewer employees sought medical or religious exemptions than had declined the vaccine the year before.