

## Hotline: Pandemic Flu and Your Local Hospital

This is a reminder that flu season is just around the corner. We know your hospital has a flu preparedness plan in place, but with novel H1N1 projected to make this flu season potentially overwhelming to any facility, we offer these questions as reminders:

1. Has your Chief of Staff met with your hospital's medical staff to review current CDC H1N1 guidelines?
2. Does your hospital or ED have a hotline number readily known by the public, so that you can screen for flu by phone – hopefully keeping the ED from becoming overcrowded or overwhelmed?
3. Has your medical staff provided screening questions and appropriate responses to those who will be manning these hotlines and/or phone banks? (Messages for keeping the worried well at home, advising those who can wait to be seen by their own physician, and advising those appear to need to come immediately to the ED or special screening units)
4. Has your medical staff been asked, "How do you want to handle the situation when flu is rampant and the hospital ED cannot handle all of your night/weekend patients? Is your medical staff prepared to clinically cover nights and weekends off-site during flu season, perhaps in specially designated flu clinics, so that the ED will not become overwhelmed?"
5. What emergency screening and triage plans has your hospital made in the event that flu – whether seasonal or H1N1 – becomes rampant in your community? Do you have alternate screening and triage sites planned, away from the hospital ED? What are the plans for staffing and providing resources for these sites?
6. Do you have alternate care sites identified, and have plans for both staffing and resourcing these sites?

Many of our hospitals have existing plans in place, based on the SARS, avian flu and swine flu epidemics of the past. Obviously, these plans can be adapted to the current novel H1N1 flu and the wave of flu predicted to hit our country this fall and winter.

This is just a friendly reminder to touch base with your medical staff and make certain everyone is on the same page, when it comes to widespread flu in your community.

The AHA is preparing a Pandemic Flu Shelf Kit for member hospitals that will include tools for communicating with the public, should flu overtake your community. It will be a useful resource for keeping the public informed, and hopefully will help you spread the word about screening individuals by phone, in physicians' offices, in special flu clinics (if needed), etc. so that we can keep our EDs open for non-flu emergencies.

You may find the following Websites helpful when working with your medical staff:

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance/>

[http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance\\_homecare\\_directions.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance_homecare_directions.htm)

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/cdcreponse.htm>

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic/healthprofessional.htm>

<http://www.healthyarkansas.com>

The Arkansas Department of Health Website ([www.healthyarkansas.com](http://www.healthyarkansas.com)) has downloadable and printable posters that may be placed in the hospital or clinician's office. Titled "Help Fight the Flu in Arkansas," these three posters remind people about the importance of hand washing, covering their coughs, and staying home when they are sick.

If hospitals or clinicians offices have digital message boards in their waiting rooms or public places or the ability to embed video messages on their in-office screens, there is also a downloadable hand washing video available at this site.