

## Community Medicine Newsletter

### Re: Novel Variant A/H7N9 Avian Influenza Human Cases in China

Dear colleagues,

As you are aware, a new type of avian influenza virus in humans (H7N9 influenza) has caused severe illness in a small number of individuals in eastern China. Fortunately, this virus has not acquired the capability for human-to-human transmission. No cases of illness from this virus have been identified outside China.

A total of **43 laboratory-confirmed cases** and **11 deaths** due to the novel H7N9 influenza virus have been reported between Feb 19 to April 11, 2013. Cases have only been reported from eastern China, particularly the municipality of Shanghai, and the provinces of Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Anhui. Age range has spanned 4 to 87 years, but with just one paediatric case in a 4 years boy.

It appears that most of the cases have had some contact with poultry. **There is no evidence of human-to-human transmission.**

Cases present with typical influenza-like illness, with progression within several days to pneumonia. In many cases, there has been rapid deterioration to acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS) requiring ICU care. However, as more cases accrue, a spectrum of illness inclusive of milder presentations is emerging. In addition to the 11 deaths, there were 19 severe cases and 9 mild cases. So far among hundreds of contacts screened, no confirmed cases have been identified. The virus appears to be susceptible to neuraminidase inhibitors such as oseltamivir.

The risk of disease spread to British Columbia is considered extremely low. If you are seeing patients with influenza-like-illness who have recently returned from China, please submit a nasopharyngeal swab for influenza, manage with antivirals as you normally would and ask your patients to stay home until well. As usual for influenza, droplet precautions and attention to hand hygiene are recommended in your office or in acute care. Please contact the VCH communicable disease control team at 604-675-3900 when investigating **severe** influenza-like-illness requiring hospitalization in a person recently arrived from Eastern China.

We will let you know if testing, treatment, or prevention recommendations change for patients in our region.

Additional information is also available on:

The Public Health Agency of Canada: <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/phn-asp/2013/h7n9-0403-eng.php>

The World Health Organization FAQ on H7N9:

[http://www.who.int/influenza/human\\_animal\\_interface/faq\\_H7N9/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/influenza/human_animal_interface/faq_H7N9/en/index.html)

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to call the nurse on-call at 604-983-6700.

Sincerely,



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Medical Health Officer

Vancouver Coastal Health, North Shore