



BE THE RESPONSE

MSAR
Quarterly Newsletter
Fall 2009

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MSAR NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Seasonal and H1N1 Information and Guidance

DPH would like to remind health care professionals that the latest information and guidance on seasonal and pandemic influenza A H1N1 can be found at www.mass.gov/flu. Updates are also posted on the DPH [blog](#). Another important resource for individuals and health care professionals is the US Department of Health and Human Services website, www.flu.gov. In addition, the Emergency Preparedness Bureau will continue to issue its weekly flu advisory for volunteers.

MSAR Volunteer Survey

As part of preparations for the upcoming flu season, DPH's Emergency Preparedness Bureau recently surveyed MSAR volunteers about their availability and willingness to assist with seasonal and H1N1 influenza vaccination clinics. Volunteers were also queried about the current status of their MSAR profile and offered assistance with logging on to the Virtual Gateway. A good number of volunteers requested assistance; those individuals can expect to be contacted shortly by an MSAR staff person.

Volunteers who did not have an opportunity to complete the survey, but would like to assist with vaccination or who require help updating their volunteer profile should contact Vanessa Kenealy via e-mail at vkenealy@mms.org.

H1N1 Influenza Response Statewide Conference Webcast

On September 30th, Governor Deval Patrick, Health and Human Services Secretary JudyAnn Bigby, Secretary of the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security Kevin Burke and DPH

Commissioner John Auerbach joined numerous DPH subject matter experts to share the latest information on H1N1 and seasonal flu at the Statewide Conference on H1N1 Influenza. Updated guidance and resources for flu vaccination planning were presented. The webcast of the conference, including all breakout and question and answer sessions is now available. *Please note* that individuals must register to view the archived webcast. <http://video.webcasts.com/events/pmny001/viewer/index.jsp?eventid=32329>

Legislative Update

S. 2028, An Act Relative to Pandemic and Disaster Preparation in the Commonwealth, was passed by the Senate in April. The House version, H. 4271, emerged from the House Ways and Means Committee with substantial changes. On October 8th, H. 4271 passed the House with additional amendments. Changes made by the House Ways and Means Committee regarding MSAR and MRC volunteers are below. The *italicized* language was inserted by the full House.

- When activated for duty, members of MSAR, MRC, DMAT and similar teams in state service would receive complete immunity from liability, rather than protection under the Mass. Tort Claims Act. The bill's actual language states that such a member "shall not be liable in a suit for damages as a result of good-faith acts or omissions while engaged in the performance of his duties as a volunteer pursuant to this section; provided, however, that this subsection shall not apply in the case of *negligence not committed under the circumstance of a public health emergency or gross negligence* willful, wanton or reckless actions by a member of the system occurring during the performance of the member's duties."
- However, MRC volunteers would **only** receive this liability protection when their "activation is requested by the governor and authorized by the Medical Reserve Corps' authorization mechanisms."
- Workers' compensation benefits for all types of volunteers were deleted in H. 4271.

The Senate and House bills will now go to a joint conference committee that will work to resolve differences between the bills

and hopefully release a consensus bill for a final vote in both houses.

Altered Standards of Care Committee

The Altered Standards of Care Advisory Committee (ASCAC) is nearing completion of its draft document. To some extent, the Committee is drawing upon a national Institute of Medicine (IOM) report issued in September entitled "Guidance for Establishing Crisis Standards of Care for Use in Disaster Situations: A Letter Report." Massachusetts will likely adopt the term "crisis" standards of care in preference to "altered," since "crisis" better reflects that the standards of care themselves do not change in a disaster, but rather the circumstances under which the standards are applied. Once finalized, the document will be presented to DPH. After DPH reviews the ASCAC report, it will determine the best process for obtaining public input and vetting.

EDUCATION & TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Pandemic Flu: Practical Information and Strategies for Preparedness

Online course: Updated October 9, 2009

This educational tool for physicians and health care professionals contains information about influenza including seasonal influenza, novel influenza strains, pandemic influenza as well as prevention and preparedness. The presentation includes detailed notes. Physicians can use the information in this activity and share it with their patients. To access the course, visit:

www.massmed.org/pandemic.

Emergency Dispensing Site Training

October 26, 2009

UMass Amherst

Amherst, MA

Presented by Ann Becker, RN, UHS Public Health Nurse and Director of the UMass Amherst Medical Reserve Corps and Barbara Coughlin, RN, and Regional Health Educator for the MA Department of Public Health, Western Regional Office. Sponsored by the UMass Amherst Medical Reserve Corps. E-mail

umassmrc@uhs.umass.edu for more information.

MHOA Annual Educational Conference

October 28-30, 2009

Mass Mutual Convention Center

Springfield, MA

The Massachusetts Health Officers Association 42nd Annual Educational Conference. For more information, contact Ruth-Ellen Sandler at resandler@metrocast.net.

Infectious Disease Surveillance: A Team Approach

November 10, 2009

The Publick House

Sturbridge, MA

Designed for hospital infection preventionists, microbiology supervisors, epidemiologists and physicians; the program is sponsored by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health Bureau of Infectious Disease Prevention, Response and Services, Division of Epidemiology & Immunization, Bureau of Laboratory Sciences, & The Northeast Branch American Society for Microbiology. For program questions and registration information, please call 617-983-6608.

VOLUNTEER RESOURCES

Where to Find a Flu Clinic in Massachusetts

All H1N1 clinics and many seasonal flu clinics will be posted on the MassPro website, <http://flu.MassPro.org>. In addition, **MA 211** is providing seasonal and H1N1 flu information for the general public including the location of flu clinics.

New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM) H1N1 Influenza Center

Visit the NEJM [H1N1 Influenza Center](#) for news updates, policy information, articles on past influenza epidemics, and an interactive map of cases worldwide.

American Journal of Public Health:

October 2009 Supplement on Influenza Preparedness

New articles released outline the needs of vulnerable populations during an influenza pandemic, including children, people with disabilities and low-income communities. These articles, which

were developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, appear in a special influenza preparedness issue of the American Journal of Public Health, published by the American Public Health Association. The Influenza Preparedness and Response supplement issue can be accessed at <http://www.ajph.org>.

AHRQ Releases New Tools to Identify and Run Alternate Care Facilities

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) recently released two interactive computer tools to help emergency planners and responders select and run alternate care facilities. One tool allows users to input information about specific medical care needs and get feedback on which sites can become alternate care facilities. The other provides feedback on which patients can appropriately be moved to those sites. The “Disaster Alternative Care Facility Selection Tool” and “Disaster Alternative Care Facility Patient Selection Tool” are available on the AHRQ web site at <http://www.ahrq.gov/prep/acfselection/>.

PREPAREDNESS IN THE NEWS

Shots for Seasonal and Swine Flu Can Be Used Together

Bloomberg News

Separate shots for swine flu and seasonal flu can be administered at the same time, said Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease in Bethesda, Maryland. The shots were studied in 800 people, and researchers found they were safe and effective when given during the same doctor visit. To read more about combining seasonal and H1N1 vaccine [click here](#).

Areas Hit Hard by Flu in Spring See Little Now

New York Times

While concern over the spread of the H1N1 virus sweeps the country, epidemiologists in New York and a few other cities that were awash in swine flu last spring are detecting very little evidence of resurgence. At the same time, officials fear that it could take a turn for the worse, and they want to maintain a high level of alertness. To read the entire article visit:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/08/health/08flu.html?hp>.

Poorer countries to get donated H1N1 vaccines: WHO
Reuters

The World Health Organization plans to start sending H1N1 influenza vaccines to poorer countries as early as next month, the United Nations agency's head of vaccine research, Marie-Paule Kieny said about 100 low- and middle-income nations will receive the vaccines donated by companies such as GlaxoSmithKline and Sanofi, as well as related supplies such as syringes. To read the full article [click here](#).

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