



The World Health Organization (WHO) has warned of a substantial risk of an influenza epidemic in the near future, most logically from the H5N1 type of avian influenza virus. One of the primary concerns is that the virus could quickly spread across countries as various birds follow their migration routes. In response, countries have begun planning in anticipation of an outbreak. This article provides general information about the Avian Flu and what you need to know about the symptoms, treatment and prevention.

WHAT IS AVIAN INFLUENZA (BIRD FLU)?

Bird flu is an infection caused by avian (bird) influenza (flu) viruses. These flu viruses occur naturally among birds. Wild birds worldwide carry the viruses in their intestines, but usually do not get sick from them. However, bird flu is very contagious among birds and can make some domesticated birds, including chickens, ducks, and turkeys, very sick and kill them.

DO BIRD FLU VIRUSES INFECT HUMANS?

Bird flu viruses do not usually infect humans, but several cases of human infection with bird flu viruses have occurred since 1997.

A severe form of avian influenza or 'bird flu' has affected poultry flocks and other birds in several Asian countries since 2003. There is no firm evidence that H5N1 has acquired the ability to pass easily from person to person, however there is concern that this virus might mix with human influenza virus to form a new virus. It is this concern, that the avian form has the ability to change its nature and mix with the human influenza virus, that has given rise to fear of a new human flu pandemic.

The high degree of concern about the virus may be explained by the fact that the avian virus, when contracted by birds, has a high mortality rate. In these animals, the viruses can present with a range of symptoms from mild illness and low mortality to a highly contagious disease with a near 100% fatality rate. The bird flu virus is currently affecting poultry and some people in Asia as the highly pathogenic H5N1 strain of the virus, the subtype H5 and more particularly subtype H5N1 are currently posing the greatest concern for human health. Two other subtypes – H9 and H7 have caused respiratory illness in people but neither has caused outbreaks in poultry as severe as H5N1.

The current outbreak is affecting birds in Asia, Russia, Turkey and Romania. The World Health Organization (WHO) believes there is mounting evidence that the H5N1 strain has a unique capacity to jump from the poultry population to humans, thereby causing severe disease, with high mortality.

See AVIAN FLU on Page 2

AVIAN FLU

Continued from page 1

As of January 7, 2006, human cases of influenza A (H5N1) infection have been reported in Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, and most recently, several cases in Turkey.

SYMPTOMS

The symptoms of human flu such as fever, cough, sore throat, muscle aches, and conjunctivitis differ from the avian form which is more likely to cause breathing problems and pneumonia particularly in those who have existing lung disease. Watery diarrhea may be present in the early stages of illness, and may precede respiratory symptoms by up to one week.

Gastrointestinal symptoms (abdominal pain, vomiting) may occur and headache has been reported. To date, there has been one case of a patient with an encephalopathic type illness.

It is important to be aware that many other illnesses of far less concern may have similar symptoms to the above.

TREATMENT

There is evidence that recent H5N1 viruses are susceptible to a class of antiviral drugs called neuraminidase inhibitors, which the government is stockpiling against the contingency of a flu pandemic.

If symptoms of flu are present the advice is to stay home and rest, take medicines such as aspirin, ibuprofen or paracetamol to relieve the symptoms, and drink plenty of fluids. If breathing difficulties occur, or symptoms seem to be worsening, medical advice must be sought.

PREVENTION

There are several potential vaccines for protecting humans from infection with bird flu, however they remain at various

See AVIAN FLU on Page 4

WORKLIFE ISSUES

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Each edition of HorizonCare:MI discusses issues faced by employees and highlights WorkLife Services designed to enhance their quality of life.

- Consumer debt, including credit cards and car loans but not mortgages, hit a record \$1.98 trillion in 2003, which translates to approximately \$18,700 per U.S. household.
- College graduates have an average of \$17,000 in student loan debt upon graduation.
- Nearly 30 percent of American workers indicate they have not saved any money for retirement.
- More than 1.4 million Americans have filed for personal bankruptcy in 2005 (01/01-10/09), up 19.4% from the same period in 2004.

This time of year, as holiday cards are replaced with holiday bills in the daily mail, many employees are faced with increasing debt and financial problems. Horizon Health's WorkLife Services offer easy-to-use, low-cost resources to help employees achieve financial well-being. Resources include information on household finance; certified financial planners; insurance; investing and investment research; taxes; debt, credit and bankruptcy; and women's financial resources and education. Financial management is only one aspect of Horizon Health's WorkLife Services. Employees may obtain referrals for many services including health and wellness, child and elder care, childbirth, self-assessment tools, and more. For



more information about how Horizon Health's WorkLife Services can benefit your employees, please contact your Horizon Health Account Manager.



BUILDING EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION

Most employees return to work after the holidays with excitement and a renewed sense of purpose. However, with the winter days darkening early and summer vacation seeming like a distant vision, this enthusiasm disappears for many as winter drags on. Although keeping employees motivated during this time of year can be a challenge, a better understanding of motivation can help managers to be more effective.

Types of Motivation

There are two types of motivation, intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation comes from an internal source and involves the stimulation, drive and feeling of fulfillment stemming from within each individual. Extrinsic motivation comes from an external source, usually by the provision of some type of reward for a job well done. Extrinsic motivation focuses the individual on the reward and not the action. This approach can be effective, but does not always produce permanent change and can actually serve to reduce intrinsic motivation. Experts agree that intrinsic motivation is a far stronger motivator than extrinsic motivation. People are the most creative when they feel motivated by interest, satisfaction, and challenge of the work itself rather than by external pressures or incentives. Although many argue that employers can only affect extrinsic motivation, there is a growing belief that by providing the right culture and work environment, employers can influence intrinsic motivation as well.

Develop a Creative Environment

The ability to make one's own choices about how to pursue an activity has been shown to enhance intrinsic motivation. Give employees the time, freedom and autonomy to make choices, to gather and process information, to fail once in a while, and to have an appreciation of the finished product. Be open to employee viewpoints and visions and provide a forum in which they can share their ideas. Encouraging imagination will result in a more exciting workplace, will help employees to feel valued, and may lead to a greater depth of learning and more creative output.

Celebrate Accomplishments

Be sure to recognize effort, not only results. Many companies have formal recognition and incentive programs, but these are often tied to achieving specific performance goals. Not everyone who works hard can get the big payoff. Most employees are more highly motivated by direct thanks and recognition in person or in writing than by more formal incentives. Be sure to offer personal praise, encouragement, and assistance whenever possible. A simple "thank you" for a job well done will go a long way toward improving morale.

Recognize Individuality

The management practice of treating all employees the same is changing. Becoming familiar with employees on an individual level will help you learn what gives them a sense of purpose and meaningfulness. Asking employees what rewards they would consider inspirational if they achieved certain milestones will help you develop incentive programs that allow for individual choice and are more motivating.

Be Positive

Studies have shown that continual negative performance feedback and controlling forms of surveillance serve to undermine intrinsic motivation. Additionally, frustration ensues when employees feel they have no recourse to settle conflicts and disagreements in the workplace. Setting a quality and style of leadership that is positive in nature and provides the opportunity for conflict resolution will help employees to feel successful and be more productive.

See *MOTIVATION* on Page 4

AVIAN FLU

Continued from page 2

stages of testing and production. Whether these will be suitable for use against a new pandemic flu strain depends on how much the pandemic strain may have mutated and changed from the original H5N1 virus strain used to create the vaccine.

Practically, the risk may be reduced by; covering the nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, using only tissues which are promptly disposed of, avoiding non-essential travel and large crowds whenever possible, and at all times maintaining good basic hygiene to include frequent washing with soap and water.

TRAVEL

As at January 2006 the WHO has not issued any travel alerts or advisories in response to the avian virus. However, travellers to countries in Asia with documented H5N1 outbreaks are advised to avoid poultry farms, and contact with animals in live markets.

MOTIVATION

Continued from page 3

Encourage Personal and Professional Growth

Offering employees the means to learn and develop new skills that can be used in the future demonstrates your commitment to them. Education and development programs often include an amount of money or paid time off employees can use for personal or professional growth. Programs that are flexible allow employees to pursue individual goals and might include classes, seminars, books, videos, or software on a variety of topics. Making this type of investment in the growth of employees will show the company's loyalty to them and help build their loyalty to the company. While there is no simple way to motivate employees, it is clear that money and financial incentives alone are not enough. Providing ongoing praise and recognition, building trust and loyalty, and offering a positive, enriching environment will help employees to feel the satisfaction and fulfillment that drive intrinsic motivation. The benefit to the company will be satisfied, productive, and more motivated employees.

SUPPORTING IMPROVEMENTS IN PERFORMANCE AND PRODUCTIVITY

Horizon Health delivers high quality cost-effective mental health services to business and industry. Our services help employees resolve personal problems that impair job performance.

For more information concerning these services please contact your Account Manager or visit us on the web at www.horizoncarelink.com

EMPLOYER SERVICES

Employer services are designed to help employers maintain a productive work environment. These include:

- Training to help supervisors identify and manage troubled employees.

- Consultation with workplace experts who combine clinical and management expertise in addressing employer concerns.
- Crisis management and response services.
- Workshops including team building, stress management, violence prevention and conflict resolution.

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS (EAP)

EAP services provide brief counseling to help troubled employees resolve problems and remain productive. Services include face-to-face counseling and a 24-hour, 365-day crisis hotline.