

PANDEMIC PLANNING

COMMUNITY HEALTH PROVIDERS NIGHT A SUCCESS

MidCentral District Health Board's pandemic planning team held a successful information evening for community providers in October. The evening was held at the Palmerston North Convention Centre to further educate and update health care professionals from MidCentral's district.

MDHB planning and contingency manager, Malinda Nash said she was pleased to see community providers from throughout the Tararua, Horowhenua and Manawatu districts attend.

"The focus of the session was to give community health providers, whether they are a dentist, GP or optometrist, up to date information on pandemic planning from a national and MidCentral perspective, and to provide useful resources to assist in their pandemic plans."

Ms Nash, pandemic planning project officer, Anna Beaven and MDHB Medical Officer of Health, Dr Jill Mackenzie each presented to the providers. Ms Nash updated providers on how planning for a pandemic is progressing, Ms Beaven spoke about community based assessment centres – the first port of call during a pandemic for people who have influenza – and Dr Mackenzie advised providers on how to manage possible bird flu patients.

Dorothy Moore from Levin Home for War Veterans attended the evening and said it was very worthwhile.

"It was informative – as now there is the need to plan for seven days – not three. Also the pandemic planning folder is a great resource for all health professionals and people involved in community groups."

Pandemic planning is not slowing down and MDHB will continue to educate the community about how to prepare for a possible pandemic.



NEW WEBSITE – REVAMPED PANDEMIC PLANNING SECTION

MidCentral DHB launched its new website – www.midcentraldhb.govt.nz at the end of October, including a revamped pandemic planning section. A series of helpful fact sheets and MDHB's pandemic plan can be easily downloaded, there is a comprehensive question and answer section as well as links to further pandemic resources and information. The pandemic information can be found under the 'Planning' section of the website. Comments and feedback are welcomed.

WORLD PANDEMIC STATUS

As of 12 November 2007, the World Health Organisation reported 335 laboratory confirmed cases of H5N1 Avian Influenza in humans and 206 fatalities. The most recent human case was a 31 year old male from Indonesia.

An international research team from the University of Wisconsin has identified a key mutation that could cause a pandemic of H5N1 should it occur in nature. They have also identified that the H5N1 viruses circulating in Europe and Africa are the closest to making the shift to a human virus. For more information or to see the full article visit: <http://www.cidrap.umn.edu/cidrap/content/influenza/panflu/news/oct0507avian.html>

New Zealand remains in Code White, which is the information advisory and planning stage of Pandemic Preparedness. Further information on NZ alert codes can be found at: <http://www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/indexmh/pandemicinfluenza-alertstatus>

PERSONAL PLANNING – FOOD AND WATER

If you have not planned ahead for yourself and your family how will you be able to respond to a pandemic or other emergency event?

During a pandemic the entire health sector will be stretched. It is vital that all individuals plan for themselves and their families, especially those with roles to play in a pandemic (GPs, hospital staff, and support services etc).

Seven days without a trip to the supermarket, dairy or petrol station – is what the Ministry of Health is urging New Zealanders to prepare for in the event of an influenza pandemic.

FOOD

Building up extra supplies of food so that you can last seven days or more is key to preparing for a pandemic. Begin by increasing supplies



of the foods you already use. Keep in mind that the additional food supplies should be ones that will keep for a long time such as rice, pasta and tinned foods. Check your extra food supplies and rotate them at least once a year to ensure they do not become out of date.

WATER

Water supplies could be affected during a pandemic so ensuring that you have stored water supplies for your family is important. You should prepare three litres of water per person, per day, and don't forget to add some for your pets. While water from a household hot water cylinder is not suitable for drinking, it can be used for washing or cooking, as can water from a toilet cistern that has not been treated with chemical toilet cleaners.

To prepare drinking water for your family you can reuse soft drink bottles:

- Wash them thoroughly with hot water
- Fill each bottle with tap water until it overflows
- Add five drops of household bleach for each litre of water
- Put the caps on tightly making sure there are no air gaps.
- Do not drink the water less than 30 minutes after filling.
- Label bottles with the date they were filled
- Check annually discarding any water that is no longer clear.

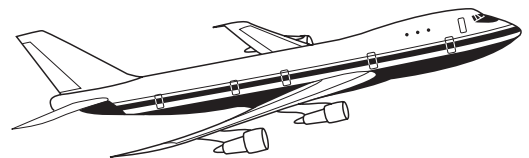
For more information on how to prepare food and water for an emergency see www.getthru.govt.nz

To give you help on how to prepare yourselves and your families for a pandemic, the next issue will focus on what you will need to have on hand to care for yourself and family who may be ill during a pandemic. If you have specific topics you would like to see discussed in this column please contact pandemic@midcentraldhb.govt.nz

BIRD FLU SCARE AT AUCKLAND AIRPORT

On November 13, 220 passengers on an international flight from Korea were held on their aircraft at Auckland International Airport as authorities feared a passenger may have become ill with avian influenza.

It was later reported a passenger had been taken to hospital in a stable condition with suspected gastroenteritis. An Auckland Airport spokesperson said the response by airport staff and medical professionals showed they were ready and had an effective plan to handle any further alerts.



INFLUENZA PANDEMIC HISTORY

1957 ASIAN FLU

The 1957 Influenza Pandemic was first recognised as an influenza epidemic in April of 1957 in Hong Kong and involved over 250,000 people. Due to the advances in technology since 1918 the virus was quickly identified as H2N2. This was a virus that only those above the age of 70 had any resistance to. To prepare for the epidemic becoming a pandemic, vaccine production began in late May 1957 and international surveillance was increased. Vaccine was available in limited supply by August 1957. By February 1958 the majority of the pandemic had finished and the H2N2 virus replaced the 1918 strain as the new endemic form of Influenza A in the global population.

Next issue will highlight the 1968 Hong Kong Flu Pandemic.