

BC RISK AND INSURANCE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION



Presented by Dr. Allan Holmes
President, Global Consulting & Global Medical Services
October 21st, 2009



PRESENTATION OBJECTIVES



- **Swine flu: The latest**
- **Current H1N1 threat and context**
- **The benefits of reducing workplace risk**
- **Interventions to consider:**
 - Education
 - Infection control
 - PPE
 - Social distancing
 - Antivirals & vaccines
- **YOUR QUESTIONS**



YOUR QUESTIONS



- What a pandemic as defined by the WHO may look like during flu season?
- What absenteeism level can organizations expect?
- What to advise employees who don't want to come in to work?
- What to provide to employees who do come into work
- What to do about employee travel
- How to maintain current service levels

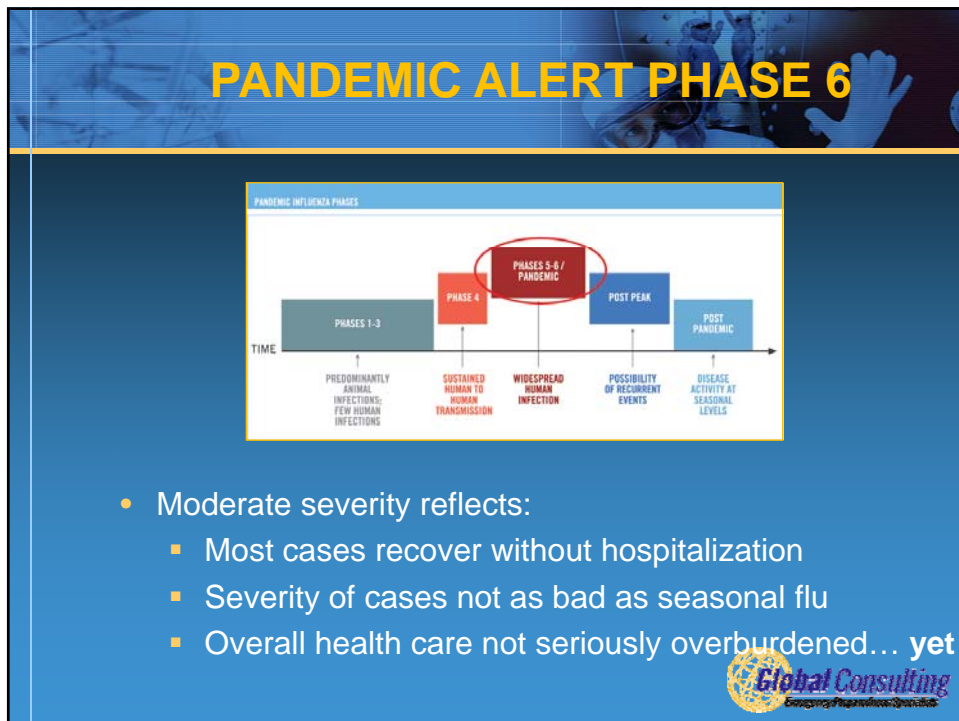
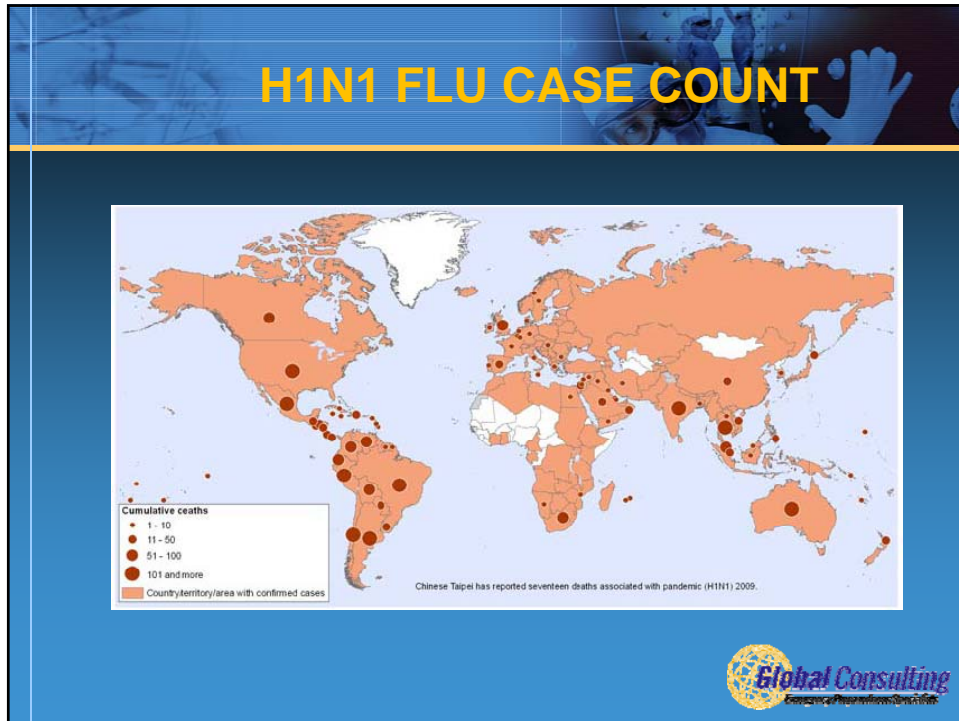


THE SWINE (H1N1) FLU STORY



- Cases were first reported in Mexico
- Cases then spread around the world = PANDEMIC
- Intensive media coverage for first few weeks; now ebbs and flows
- Original concern over high death rate in Mexico
- Variable illness by country





H1N1: THE CURRENT CONTEXT



- More contagious than seasonal flu
- Primarily affects under-40 age set
- At-risk groups:
 - Pregnant women
 - Underlying health conditions (e.g., asthma, diabetes)
- Questions about severity in First Nations' communities
- Fatality rate of 0.4% (similar to the milder 1957 pandemic)
- 30% of the population may become ill in the fall/winter; severity could increase



FUTURE CONCERNS



- Second, third waves could come in the fall and beyond
- Varied responses by countries/organizations
- Disconnect between policy-makers and frontline responders
- Minimal health care infrastructure & more chronic disease in the developing world
- A vaccine is coming but will people take it ?
- Supply concerns (e.g., antivirals)



RELEVANT GUIDANCE



- The U.S. CDC has published guidance for a range of audiences:
 - Clinicians and first responders
 - Public/Businesses
- PHAC has published guidance:
 - Clinicians and laboratory leads
 - Public communications
- Global has the following free guidance
 - Calgary Chamber of Commerce Pandemic Business Toolkit
 - News updates



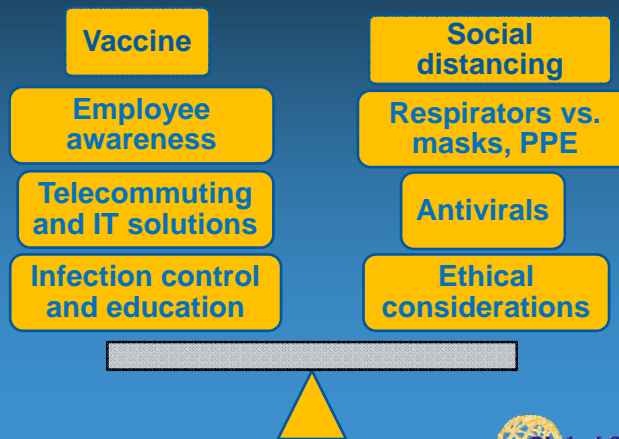
OPERATIONAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES ISSUES



- Staff absenteeism and worried well (40% or more?)
- Impact of public health measures on facilities and operations
- Supply disruptions
- Limited support available from other agencies, groups
- Ability to maintain critical functions, essential records



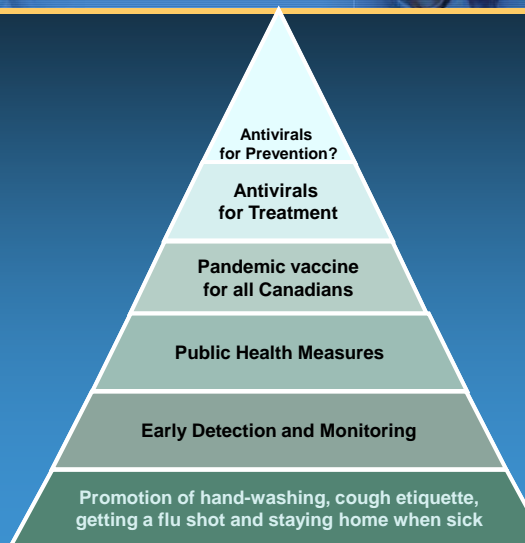
WORKPLACE INTERVENTIONS: WHAT TO PROVIDE



HOW WILL THE VIRUS SPREAD?



Range of Strategies



EXISTING STRATEGIES

- Several strategies to help reduce the impact of severe wave of H1N1 or other influenza.
 - Hand sanitizing stations
 - Flu prevention education
 - Handwashing, cough etiquette posters
 - OHAS Bulletin Boards
 - Communications via Portal
 - Expanded sick policy
 - Staff home if you or household member ill
 - Stay home for 24 hours after all symptoms have resolved



EXISTING STRATEGIES

- Existing strategies continued....
 - Visitor Screening
 - Email questions in advance
 - Security confirms when visitor signs in
 - Disinfectant wipes available on all floors
 - In photocopier rooms & meeting rooms
 - Staff working at windows have been provided gloves
 - Flu kits provided to all staff



FUTURE STRATEGIES

- **Social Distancing**



- Closing common areas (lunchroom & lifestyle centre)
- Cancelling face-to-face meetings
- No interaction with staff on other floors
- Increased telecommuting – working remotely using BCP hardware provided for work at home
- Shifting work hours for some staff to reduce concentration in the office



FUTURE STRATEGIES CONT'D...

- **Business Function Prioritization**
- **CMT to make decisions on corporate activities**
- **Redeployment of staff to critical areas needing support**



EMPLOYEE EDUCATION & AWARENESS: BEST PRACTICES



- Portal or webpages with frequent updates
- Providing a mechanisms for employee questions
 - H1N1@your company
- Have an FAQ bank
- Using the business toolkit posters from CDC



TELECOMMUTING BEST PRACTICES

- Requires considerable work: not as easy as it sounds
- Need to actually test this
 - Try a real day of work to check out pros and cons
- Planning for reduced efficiency
- Informing staff the need to see this as a workplace



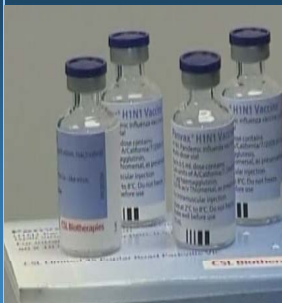
N95 RESPIRATORS VS. MASKS



- Integrate into current practice
- Consider N95 for staff and surgical masks for “sick at work”
- Use a risk stratification to target those who actually would benefit
- Plan for challenges regarding fit testing
- Do a mini-exercise/drill for even a half day to assess compliance
- **NEED TO COMMUNICATE**



Seasonal Vaccine



- How confusing can they make it?
- Now a 3 phase approach for many provinces
- Phase 1 – Those > 65 (now)
- Phase 2 – H1N1 roll out (November) first by priority and then general population (December or later?)
- Phase 3 – Resume seasonal



Vaccine Strategy Issues

- “Now we have the vaccine”
- Will it work? Side effects?
- Distribution logistics, time for effect
- NOT A SOLE STRATEGY
- Need to look to an antiviral and PPE strategies to complement



Pandemic H1N1 Vaccine

- If you are serious about this strategy you will need to promote it!
- Need to consider up to 50% refusing
- Voluntary only, can't reassign
- Employees need ongoing information
- Leadership is essential



Antiviral Strategies



- Ontario companies considering antiviral programs a higher priority
- Split between prophylaxis and treatment strategies
- Post SARS groups stockpiled for prophylaxis, especially in healthcare
- Companies wanting to have some mitigation strategy



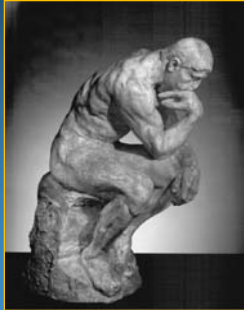
Antiviral Strategies



- Four components
 - Acquisition
 - Education/Prescription
 - Dispensing
 - Medical oversight
- Regardless of strategy, need to communicate to front line staff



ETHICAL AND LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS



- Ability to stockpile PPE, antivirals?
- For whom?
- All employees vs. business-critical?
- What are employees', the public's expectations?
- What can be budgeted?
- Legal requirements – maintaining a safe working environment
- Liability considerations and provincial guidelines



SOME ADDITIONAL HR ISSUES



- “Sick at Work” – all about self screening
- Return to Work – consider the CDC guidelines
- Sick members of the family- all about self screening
- No quarantine language
- How to clean your workplace – the air is clean



ADDITIONAL ISSUES



- Work refusal
 - if you have planned, work is safer than home
 - Impossible to prove “where” you got infected
- Employee travel



QUESTIONS? THANK YOU!

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Dr. Allan Holmes

EMAIL: info@global-consulting.ca

PHONE: 604.685.4747 (ext. 225)

PANDEMIC PLANNING RESOURCES:

<http://h1n1flu2009.blogspot.com/>

www.global-consulting.ca/content

