



Communication to All Employees

RE: H1N1 Influenza

June 11, 2009

The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared the H1N1 Influenza (Swine Flu) a Pandemic by moving to Phase 6. Director General Dr. Margaret Chan made the declaration, saying the new H1N1 virus is currently expected to lead to a pandemic of moderate severity.

Kwantlen Polytechnic University has been closely following the declaration of a pandemic and understands that the move to Phase 6 is based on the spread of the virus and not on its severity. Though the spread of the virus is a cause of concern, the relatively small number of serious cases shows the severity level as not being very high at this time.

With the declaration of a pandemic, the WHO and other Health Agencies (Fraser Health Authority, BC Centre for Disease Control, Public Health Agency of Canada, etc.) have not changed their tactics in dealing with the H1N1 Influenza (Swine Flu). No travel restrictions are recommended at this time and each organization is expected to deal with possible cases with internal procedures. The WHO continues to recommend appropriate hand hygiene and cough/sneeze etiquette.

Kwantlen is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for its employees/students and will continue to update the Kwantlen community as we go forward. Please continue to follow the procedures outlined below and for your information, a brief Q & A in regards to Phase 6 is also provided.

- Observance of appropriate hand hygiene procedures (washing hands, using hand sanitizer, etc.)

- When/If you cough, please cover your mouth with a tissue or your arm and immediately wash/sanitize your hands if necessary
- If you are experiencing extreme flu like symptoms and have come back from a country that has reported cases of the H1N1 Influenza, please call Health Link BC AT 8-1-1 for more information before consulting with your physician

For further information, please visit: www.kwantlen.ca/h1n1info

What is phase 6?

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Phase 6 is a pandemic, according to the WHO definition.

What about severity?

At this time, WHO considers the overall severity of the influenza pandemic to be moderate. This assessment is based on scientific evidence available to WHO, as well as input from its Member States on the pandemic's impact on their health systems, and their social and economic functioning.

The moderate assessment reflects that:

1. Most people recover from infection without the need for hospitalization or medical care.
2. Overall, national levels of severe illness from influenza A(H1N1) appear similar to levels seen during local seasonal influenza periods, although high levels of disease have occurred in some local areas and institutions.
3. Overall, hospitals and health care systems in most countries have been able to cope with the numbers of people seeking care, although some facilities and systems have been stressed in some localities.

WHO is concerned about current patterns of serious cases and deaths that are occurring primarily among young persons, including the previously healthy and those with pre-existing medical conditions or pregnancy.

Large outbreaks of disease have not yet been reported in many countries, and the full clinical spectrum of disease is not yet known.

Does WHO expect the severity of the pandemic to change over time?

The severity of pandemics can change over time and differ by location or population.

Close monitoring of the disease and timely and regular sharing of information between WHO and its Member States during the pandemic period is essential for evaluating future severity assessments.

Future severity assessments would reflect one or a combination of the following factors:

- changes in the virus,
- underlying vulnerabilities, or
- limitations in health system capacities.

The pandemic is early in its evolution and many countries have not yet been substantially affected.

What do I do now? What actions should I look for in my community?

Stay informed. Go to reliable sources of information, including your Ministry of Health, to learn what you can do to protect yourself and stay updated as the pandemic evolves. Community-specific information is available from local or national health authorities.

You can also continue to visit the WHO web site for simple prevention practices and general advice.

* *Provided by the World Health Organization*