



Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
Ministry of Public Health
Office of the Minister
Public Relations

Press Release

MOPH, WHO assure flu epidemic vigilance in Afghanistan

Kabul, 27 April 2009- It is an urgent global concern that cases of influenza infection with a new virus, currently being reported in some areas of Mexico, the United States and Canada. WHO does not yet have a complete picture of the epidemiology or the risks, including possible spread beyond the currently affected areas.

The symptoms of swine flu in people are similar to the symptoms of seasonal human flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Like seasonal flu, swine flu may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions.

“MoPH Afghanistan is closely and seriously monitoring incidence of Acute Respiratory Infections and illnesses with symptoms and signs of influenza and common cold. Seasonal influenza rapidly spreads and in Afghanistan cases peak in the winter and decline in the warmer months. Reports from the Diseases Early Warning System (DEWS) department of MoPH indicate that this year the incidence of cough and cold has been declining since the second week of January 2009” said Dr. Sayed Mohammad Amin Fatimie, the Minister of Public Health. He also added that “to prevent contracting the flu virus and spreading it to others it is advisable that we should wash our hands with soap, avoid touching our eyes, nose or mouth, avoid close contact, and cover our mouth during coughing. MoPH will inform people through its website, press releases and media about any flue outbreaks in Afghanistan”.

WHO Representative in Afghanistan Mr Peter Graaff highlights the need for a close collaboration with MoPH in strengthening surveillance systems and updating the national pandemic preparedness plan. Health partners are also alerted on the current situation to ensure unified outbreak preparedness and action plan.

WHO has activated the Strategic Health Operation Centre (SHOC) in the Regional Office in Cairo. In this centre, WHO epidemiologists and communicable disease control experts along with professionals in emergency preparedness, communication and logistics are convening

regular meetings with their counterparts across the world to coordinate WHO's regional response.

Between 17-24 April 2009 in Mexico, 1149 persons (with 71 deaths, case fatality rate of 6.2%). The Government of Mexico has ordered to close museums and schools for millions of students in and around the capital on Friday, 24 April 2009 and urged people with flu symptoms to stay home.

MoPH Afghanistan is indebted to many individuals and health stakeholders, especially Afghan families and elders, the USAID, the World Bank, the European Commission, UNICEF, WHO, UNFPA, Rotary International, CIDA, Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI Alliance) and JICA and many other individual organizations and countries.

Ministry of Public Health delivers health services impartially and without any form of discrimination to the needy people of Afghanistan in all corners of the country and requests all parties to respect this policy and support health care providers to fulfill this noble job.

To read more on the Ministry of Public Health's activities, please visit: <http://www.moph.gov.af/>; WHO Afghanistan's website: www.emro.who.int/afghanistan

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