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NOVEL INFLUENZA A (H1N1) CONTINUES IN BUTTE COUNTY

BUTTE COUNTY, Calif. — Butte County Public Health (BCPH) continues to detect infections of the novel influenza A (H1N1) virus. Laboratory specimens are being sent from a sample of the patients who present to hospitals and clinics with influenza like illness (ILI). Eight more cases of novel H1N1 influenza have been reported to Butte County Public Health Department, bringing the total number of cases to thirteen.

As of 7/1/09, Butte County Public Health had submitted 74 specimens to the state laboratory network. Thirteen of those specimens have been confirmed as the novel influenza A (H1N1) virus. The 13 confirmed cases include 4 middle-aged persons, 8 young adults, and 1 child. Four cases are female and 9 are male. Eight cases have been hospitalized. BCPH is also monitoring ILI presenting to clinics and hospitals in Butte County. There does not appear to be any significant increase in ILI at these selected centers.

Butte County Health Officer Mark Lundberg, M.D. stated that national and statewide data show young people are at greater risk for the novel influenza A (H1N1). According to recent data from the California Department of Public Health there have been 1,294 confirmed cases of the novel influenza A (H1N1) as of 6/25/09, and over 93% of confirmed cases have been less than 50 years of age; 60% less than age 20. Similarly, the federal Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recently reported there are now more than 27,000 confirmed cases in the U.S. and the majority of cases are under age 25. Other CDC data on confirmed cases includes the following:

- Nearly 80% of hospitalized cases are less than 50 years of age
- The median age of hospitalized cases is 19 years
- The median age of fatal cases is 37 years
- Morbid or severe obesity is a risk factor for hospitalization and death (most likely due to compromised lung function in the severely obese)
- Very few cases and hospitalizations are occurring in persons 65 and older - however, the death rate appears high among the older patients that are hospitalized

NOVEL INFLUENZA A (H1N1) CONTINUES IN BUTTE COUNTY— 2

The symptoms of the novel influenza A (H1N1) are similar to the symptoms of regular seasonal influenza and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have also reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with the novel H1N1 influenza.

Some people are at higher risk for serious complications of the flu, including children younger than 2 years old, adults 65 years of age and older, residents of nursing homes and other chronic-care facilities, patients with chronic medical conditions, pregnant women, and persons younger than 19 years of age who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy. It is important that people who fall into any of these higher-risk categories seek medical care if they become ill with an influenza-like illness.

Lundberg urged Butte County residents to take common sense steps to protect themselves, and others in the community, from influenza. The flu is generally spread by direct contact to germs from an infected person, from either uncovered coughs or sneezes or by touching something the infected person has handled. Steps for preventing the spread of the influenza include:

- Wash your hands frequently with warm water and soap for 20 seconds.
- Use hand sanitizers when washing is not practical.
- Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose, and mouth to prevent the virus from entering the body.
- Cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue or into your arm, wash hands afterwards.
- Stay home when you are sick.

Butte County Public Health has an information line at 1-866-444-2405. In addition, helpful links for information about the Novel H1N1 influenza can be found at CDC and California Department of Public Health web sites, which are posted at www.buttecounty.net/publichealth.

For further information, contact Dr. Mark Lundberg, Health Officer, phone: (530) 538-7583, fax: (530) 538-2164, email: mlundberg@buttecounty.net.

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Butte County Public Health Department

Our Mission: To protect the public through promoting individual, community and environmental health.