

This is Important New Information for Primary Care (6.7.09)

On 2/7/09, the Health Secretary, Andy Burnham, announced that with immediate effect, the UK will move from a “containment phase” to a “treatment phase” for Swine Flu.

This will change how GPs and other health professionals handle likely cases of flu

- GPs will now diagnose flu clinically
- There will be an immediate end to nose and throat swabbing.
- There will be an immediate end to contact tracing and antiviral prophylaxis
- Primary Care Trusts will now begin to establish antiviral collection points where necessary (possibly with a patient assessment function as well).
- People diagnosed with flu will still be prescribed antivirals by GPs.
- Because people can recover from Swine Flu without antivirals, the DOH feels the need to prescribe these should be a matter of GP and/or patient discretion.
- If antivirals are prescribed, GPs should issue an FP10 annotated with the phrase “convenient stationery”
An authorisation number from the Flu Response Centre is no longer needed
- Using FP10s is a pragmatic interim solution until the DOH issuing prescribers with “Antiviral Vouchers” in the near future.
- Details of antiviral doses for each age group can be found at http://www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAwebFile/HPAweb_C/1243581475043
- The FP10 can be taken by a flu friend to a designated community pharmacy (or, an ACP where one exists) to pick up antiviral medication.
PCTs should have given all practices a list of designated pharmacies.
- If people think they have Swine Flu, they should check their symptoms on www.nhs.uk, or call NHS Direct (0845 46 47) or call the Swine Flu information line on 0800 1 513 513.
- If they are still concerned, they should then call their GP, for initial assessment over the phone.
- GPs should enquire about any contacts with serious health conditions that would justify prophylactic antiviral use.
- Priority cases for receiving antivirals are listed at the end of this document
- If GPs need clinical advice they should phone their Flu Response Centre as previously (0845 425 1758).
- People should not go to GP surgeries or A&E if they suspect they have swine flu.
- As case volumes rise further, the UK will move to a system where cases are diagnosed and dealt with by the National Pandemic Flu Service.
- The first batches of vaccines are expected to arrive in August, with around 60 million doses available by the end of the year.

Pandemic influenza high risk groups

Some people will be at greater risk of becoming more seriously ill from swine flu than others. As advised by the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) these high risk groups are:

- People with:
 - Chronic lung disease
 - Chronic heart disease
 - Chronic kidney disease
 - Chronic liver disease
 - Chronic neurological disease
 - Immunosuppression (whether caused by disease or treatment)
 - Diabetes mellitus
- Patients who have had drug treatment for their asthma within the past three years
- Pregnant women
- People aged 65 years and older
- Young children under 5 years old.

Paul Roblin

LMC CEO

6.7.09