VER STORY

Flu (Influenza)-Outbreak Spreading Rapidly in India

1 Mar 2015 logo0 comments Share |



By **DR. ANIS ANSARI**

Flu (Influenza), also called swine flu, is a worldwide problem every year, causing havoc in India this year. According to the latest information, health authorities are working hard to contain the outbreak, which has killed more than 700 people since mid-December. The number of cases has doubled since last week to more than 11,000. So far, most of affected areas are in Rajasthan and Telangana.

In the United States this year, influenza A H3N2, which is considered more severe type, is responsible for a lot of hospitalisation and death. The vaccine available is only 23% effective against the virus. The vaccine effectiveness varies from year-to-year depending on the selection of the viruses prior to development of the vaccine. Influenza Virus has spread to all contiguous part of the United States. It is thought to have killed 200,000 people worldwide over the years. The Centre for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that 5-20 per cent of Americans get affected by flu each year and 3,000 to 49,000 die due to flu and its complications. Flu season starts in October and lasts until March.

The virus infects nose, throat, and lungs. It can cause mild- to- severe illness and at times can lead to death. The best way to prevent flu is by getting a flu vaccine each year. Flu signs and symptoms include fever, chills, runny nose, sore throat, fatigue, and body aches. The flu virus spread by droplets made when people cough or sneeze. One hard cough can throw a million particles enough to infect everyone in the room or up to 6 feet away. Frequent hand washing and wearing a mask can help limit the spread.

Most healthy people can infect others beginning one day before the symptoms develop and up to 5-7 days after becoming sick. The complication of flu includes bacterial pneumonia, sinus and ear infection, worsening of asthma, congestive heart failure, and diabetes.

Most people recover on their own without medical care or antiviral drugs. According to the CDC advisory, people with minor flu should stay home and avoid contact with others at least until 24 hours after fever is gone except to get medical care. Antiviral medications must be started within 48 hours of symptoms in order to be effective. They are expensive and may not work for everyone. Rapid influenza tests are available everywhere.

There are many kinds of vaccines available. The standard trivalent vaccine developed using virus grown in eggs, protects against two influenza A viruses (H1N1 and H3N2) and an influenza B virus. It is given intramuscularly for anyone aged 6 months and up. Anyone who has allergy to eggs cannot be given the vaccine. The quadrivalent flu vaccine protects against two influenza A viruses and two influenza B viruses. It can be given by injection or nasal spray for people 2 through 49 years of age.

There are certain people who are at higher risks than others. High priority should be given to those who are immunosuppressed like the very young or older than 65, morbidly obese, or with HIV/AIDS, cancer, COPD, neurological disorder, diabetes, heart and kidney problems.

Clearly, the flu is a perennial worldwide problem, which must be dealt with promptly with widespread education, getting Flu vaccines to everyone on time, frequent hand washing, and use of face mask when infected are the keys to combating this menace.

***[ANIS ANSARI, MD, FASN, is Board Certified in Internal Medicine, Clinton, Iowa USA***]

- See more at: http://radianceweekly.in/portal/issue/banning-pig-farming-an-option-for-controlling-swine-flu/article/flu-influenza-outbreak-spreading-rapidly-in-india/#sthash.WuUtpYRK.MJ83tqIz.dpuf