

## **University of Kansas School of Medicine – Wichita**

### **Emergency Plan for Pandemic Flu**

**Approved: October 1, 2009**

#### **Introduction:**

The purpose of this document is to outline steps that will be taken by The University of Kansas School of Medicine - Wichita (KUSM-W) in the event of a pandemic illness. A pandemic illness is a public health emergency that would place extraordinary demands on KUSM-W as well as providers of education and research services around the world. It is likely that a pandemic illness will occur in several waves of infection. It is also likely that a pandemic illness will occur simultaneously throughout much of the nation, affecting access to material and human resources.

Although the exact cause of a pandemic illness cannot be predicted, public health experts assume that the next pandemic will be caused by a new airborne disease, such as a novel strain of influenza readily transmitted through the droplet or airborne routes from one person to another.

Because of this assumption, pandemic influenza is used as the model for this plan. In the event of a pandemic caused by a different illness, this plan will be adapted for use based on the transmission methods and risks associated with that illness. The basic structure of the plan should be relevant.

#### **Activation**

Activation of this plan may occur in phases, based on the proximity of risk to the community and facility. Our response will be guided by recommendations gathered from the World Health Organization (WHO), the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Kansas Department of Health & Environment (KDHE).

#### **Basic influenza information**

The flu, or influenza, is a respiratory illness caused by airborne viruses that spread from person-to-person by droplets from coughing or sneezing. The period between becoming infected with the virus and becoming ill is usually 1 to 4 days. The contagious period is 3 to 5 days from the onset of symptoms. Symptoms of the flu, or influenza, are:

- Fever (up to 104 degrees) and sweating/chills
- Headache, muscle aches and/or stiffness
- Shortness of breath
- Vomiting and nausea (in children)

A cold and flu are alike in many ways. A stuffy nose, sore throat and sneezing are usually signs of a cold. "Stomach flu" is not really the flu, as there are no respiratory symptoms. Nausea, vomiting and diarrhea without the fever, cough, aching and respiratory

symptoms is actually gastroenteritis, but some people call it "stomach flu." This form is caused by other microorganisms and has no relationship to true influenza.

Flu viruses spread in respiratory droplets caused by coughing and sneezing. They usually spread from close person-to-person contact, though sometimes people become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth, eyes or nose. The virus can live for as long as two hours on surfaces like doorknobs, desks and tables.

Healthy adults, infected with the virus, may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 5 days or more after becoming sick. That means that you can pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick.

### **Assumptions**

This plan takes into account the following assumptions about a pandemic event:

- The first outbreaks in the U.S. are likely to occur in major metropolitan areas where the rates of international and business travel are high.
- Susceptibility to the virus will be universal.
- The disease will likely occur in multiple waves and each wave will last between 6 and 12 weeks.
- Each wave of disease will be separated by several months.
- If KUSM-W is affected by a pandemic, the rest of the country will be affected.
- Each emergency event is unique and this plan cannot address every possible scenario.
- Decisions may be made during a pandemic that vary from this plan.
- An outbreak could interrupt normal University functioning for a period of two to four weeks up to several months.
- University workers will be disproportionately exposed to the pandemic illness due to the proximity of KU School of Medicine – Wichita Internal Medicine Clinic, (CLINIC) as well as collaborative work being done at Via Christi Regional Medical Center, Wesley Medical Center and the Robert J. Dole VA Medical Center.
- KUSM-W may implement social distancing measures and evacuate many of its students and employees, but it will likely need to maintain some systems to continue essential operations.
- Essential employees may need to function from either remote or campus locations to maintain services. Options for limiting exposure of essential employees to the virus might be beneficial. Staff may be requested to work multiple shifts and critical staff may need to be on campus to service critical campus systems.
- Some level of loss of essential employees to illness will require back up options for essential functions.
- Absenteeism may be affected by the closing of public schools, quarantines, and other measures taken in the community.
- Medication to combat the illness will likely be in short supply and higher in price after an outbreak.

- Effective prevention and therapeutic measures, including vaccine and antiviral medications, will be delayed and in short supply.

### **Prevention**

Education and early identification of a pandemic illness are important to prevent the illness from spreading. The following methods are in place to educate students, faculty and staff and to monitor unusual numbers or cases of influenza-like illnesses:

- Communicate to students, faculty and staff to:
  - 1) Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, or better, cough into your sleeve (elbow).
  - 2) Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
  - 3) Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
  - 4) Avoid close contact with sick people.
  - 5) Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
  - 6) If you get influenza-like illness symptoms, stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them. It is anticipated that standard policies regarding doctor's release and mandatory use of sick leave may be modified by the State.
- Monitor the postings on the CDC web site and that of the local and state health departments and follow local health department advice about possible closure of colleges and universities

### **Internal Communication**

- When there is a pandemic alert, or a possible pandemic situation, the Emergency Management Group will work with University Relations to ensure that the most up-to-date CDC and KUSM-W specific information is shared with the Students, Faculty, Staff and Visitors.
- Methods for communication include posters, website updates, broadcast emails, RAVE text messaging, telephone hotlines, telephone messaging, and radio communications.

### **External Communication**

#### **Outgoing Communications**

- The University Relations department will handle all media inquiries specific to the pandemic.
- Communication with the media will be vital to counteract misleading information that will inevitably be broadcast concerning the virus itself as well as information concerning the university.

#### **Incoming Communications**

- KDHE has a Public Health Information Exchange (PHIX) system in place to provide information via email and pager, to subscribers.
- KDHE has 24-hour telephone hotlines.
- KUSM-W Emergency Management Group will monitor the Sedgwick County Emergency Management web site.

### **Facility Access and Security**

- Lockdown procedures can rapidly be put in place by KUSM-W Security to prevent entry to the facility.
- The number of entry points will be established based on the nature and scope of the event.

### **Closing the University**

CDC and other health sources recommend taking steps toward social distancing, minimizing public assemblies, proper cough/sneeze etiquette, increased hand washing, and other actions, in order to slow, but never stop, the spread of the virus. KUSM-W may be directed by local, state or federal authorities to close.

The suspension of all classes and the closing of all facilities will be potentially very disruptive for students wishing to attain their programs in a timely manner. Nevertheless, the KUSM-W Pandemic Plan must contain such a scenario as a necessary means to protect members of the School of Medicine - Wichita community.

The decision to close the School of Medicine - Wichita will be made by the Dean based on input from the Emergency Management Group. It will be based upon a combination of the following decision criteria, factors and assumptions:

- World Health Organization declaration of Phase 6—Pandemic period: Increased and sustained transmission in the general U.S. population
- Confirmation of a high rate of infectivity, morbidity (rate of infection) and/or mortality (death rate)
- Rate/speed of disease spreading
- Local public health recommendations to curtail/cancel public activities in county or state Falling class attendance, students leaving campus
- Rising employee absenteeism (up to an estimated 50% of the non-medical staff)
- Other regional schools/school systems closing
- Transportation systems closing/curtailing interstate travel
- Cases in the local Wichita metropolitan area occurring early versus late in the overall U.S. experience with the unfolding pandemic

During the period when classes are suspended, most campus academic, administrative, and support operations will be closed. Minimal utilities will be supplied to buildings, but all routine, normal daily housekeeping and maintenance activities will cease until such a time when the re-opening of campus buildings has been announced. Buildings will be secured in a way to prevent re-entry by all but approved essential staff.

### **Staffing**

Staff levels and needs will be assessed and determined by the Emergency Management Group and the Dean following the guidance provided by the Americans with Disabilities Act. University Security and Facilities Management staff will be needed to maintain

safe, secure, and hazard-free buildings. Other essential staff will be determined by the Emergency Management Group and the Dean, and would likely include staff from Information Technology Services and upper administration. The way in which these essential staff members conduct themselves while on campus will be done in a manner to minimize exposure to others who may be carrying the virus.

### **Emergency Workers/Mutual Aid Agreements**

It may be possible to set up agreements with outside agencies to conduct work that is vital to the university, but that may become impossible due to absenteeism.

### **Resources**

Center for Disease Control and Prevention – [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

World Health Organization – [www.who.int/en/](http://www.who.int/en/)

Kansas Department of Health & Environment – [www.kdheks.gov](http://www.kdheks.gov)