

SAN ANTONIO METROPOLITAN HEALTH DISTRICT



332 West Commerce
San Antonio, Texas 78205-2489
PHONE (210) 207-8780 FAX (210) 207-8999

Guidance for Bexar County Clinicians: Vaccine Registration

September 3, 2009

Dear Fellow Clinician,

The H1N1 response planning is well under way, and active surveillance is ongoing. As preparations are made for mass vaccination to build immunity against this novel virus, Metro Health is encouraging all eligible physicians in Bexar County to register to be a vaccine provider of this new vaccine. Physicians practicing Internal Medicine, Pediatrics, Obstetrics, and Family Medicine are advised that many of their established patients will be approaching them for information, advice, and access to countermeasures against novel H1N1 influenza. In addition, new patients will probably be looking for medical providers at the last minute once levels of anxiety motivate them to establish with a PCP. Though the concept of a medical home may not be something they consider a goal at this time, this situation presents us with the opportunity to reinforce to the public the value of primary care access as a component of emergency preparedness.

The **San Antonio Metropolitan Health District (SAMHD)** is encouraging the larger medical community to be closer and more active partners in the actual response. Nontraditional public health extenders, such as employee health program staff of the business community, outside of the healthcare industry, are potential partners that can offer vaccine services at the worksite to ensure continuation of operations, and as a benefit to their employees' family members.

The newest influenza vaccine has been formulated to target specific hemagglutinin and neuraminidase glycoproteins by the standard egg-based method. Unlike the usual method of selecting components of seasonal influenza vaccine based on expert opinion, this countermeasure against the infectious pandemic is hoped to be effective in minimizing the extent of the outbreak, as well as the scope and severity of associated complications.

DSHS is the only supplier of vaccine targeting novel H1N1 influenza for Texas, and will set aside doses for clinicians who have pre-registered. To become a vaccinator, the process is brief and uncomplicated. Pre-registering does not obligate clinicians to vaccinate unless they concur with the need to do so. The link to pre-register is www.TexasFlu.org.

The following are guidelines for patients to be considered for vaccination against novel H1N1 influenza:

Patients with one or more of the following:

- 1) **Persons between the age of 6 months to 25 years**
- 2) **Persons who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age**
- 3) **Pregnant women**
- 4) **Immunocompromised patients, at any age**
- 5) **Patients between the ages of 25 and 64 years with chronic medical conditions that put them at high risk for complications from flu (e.g. diabetes, heart disease, and chronic pulmonary conditions, such as asthma, COPD, or pulmonary fibrosis)**
- 6) **Healthcare, emergency medical services workers, and other essential first responders**

Not every individual who has had casual exposure to possible or suspected flu cases needs treatment with antiviral agents.

Questions may arise regarding liability waivers. Since this countermeasure will be used during a declared emergency, the PREP Act (Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness), 42 United States Code sec. 247d-6d, creates immunity from tort liability for "covered" persons who are involved in administration and use of "covered countermeasures". Any health professionals or clinical entities considering provision of vaccination services are advised to become familiar with this legislation.

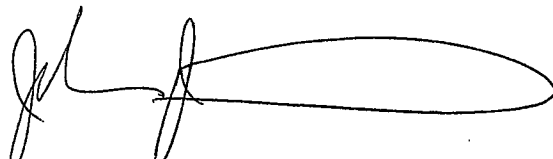
We use this opportunity to remind you of the responsibility for protecting our residents in all age groups against the regular seasonal flu viruses. The vaccine for our annual flu vaccination campaign is already being distributed in our community and should be available for you to offer your patients.

Clinicians with additional questions are directed to the Metro Health website, where there will be links to both CDC (www.cdc.gov) and DSHS (www.TexasFlu.org) resources.

Sincerely,



Fernando A. Guerra, M.D, M.P.H.
Director of Health



John J. Nava, M.D.
Senior Public Health Physician