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Awareness campaign aims to "Stop the flu at OU"

By **Dave Groves**, staff writer

Public health officials across the country are seeing signs that suggest the H1N1 strain of Influenza A will be a significant health concern on college campuses this fall. Many colleges have reported rapid transmission of the respiratory tract infection even as classes are just getting under way. As such, Oakland University officials hope the campus community will help "Stop the Flu at OU."

Typical symptoms of the flu include fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, body aches and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting. Students, staff and faculty who exhibit these symptoms should not come to school or work and, if necessary, contact their primary care physician or Graham Health Center. Students living in on-campus housing may want to consider returning home while sick in order to prevent further spread of the virus.

Those who get the flu are advised to stay home for 24 hours after their fever has ended, as it has been shown that they can remain contagious until this point.

In terms of its impact on human health, H1N1 virus has been found to be no more threatening than regular seasonal flu. The rate of human-to-human transmission, however, has prompted the World Health Organization (WHO) to classify it as a Phase 6 pandemic.

A vaccine for H1N1 is currently in development, but many experts anticipate that it will not be available until October and that it won't become fully effective in recipients until late November. As such, the vaccine will not arrive in time to head off a rapid spread of the infection. Also, the OU community is strongly encouraged to get seasonal flu shots, but should know that these will not protect against H1N1.

Given this, the most effective approach students, staff and faculty have to avoid getting sick and spreading the virus is ardent personal hygiene. This should include:

- Washing hands thoroughly and frequently
- Using hand sanitizers with at least 60 percent alcohol when soap is not available
- Not touching the eyes, nose and mouth
- Using a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing
- Avoiding direct contact with fixtures in public restrooms
- Avoiding shared use of cell phones and keeping them clean
- Cleaning personal and shared work spaces and equipment, including desk phones, preferably with a disinfectant that is labeled as virucidal or effective against influenza H1N1
- Avoiding crowded areas and shaking hands
- Limiting social contact with anyone exhibiting flu-like symptoms

Another way to prevent infection is to boost the immune system by eating healthy foods and getting adequate sleep.

Those wishing to learn more about the status of the pandemic are encouraged to monitor advisories issued by the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** and the **World Health Organization (WHO)**. For more additional information on the status of the H1N1 flu pandemic and infection prevention methods, visit **OU's Infection Prevention & Control Web site**, the **Oakland County Health Division Web site** and **www.flu.gov**.

SUMMARY

Public health officials believe that the H1N1 strain of Influenza A will be a significant health concern on college campuses this fall. Students can help "Stop the Flu at OU."

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