

From: Sollinger, Virginia
Sent: Wednesday, September 02, 2009 11:50 AM
To: Faculty-Group
Subject: Influenza planning at UM-Flint this fall

This email is being sent on behalf of Vahid Lotfi, Interim Provost and Bob Stach, Chair of Faculty Council.

Dear faculty members:

The start of the academic year is always an exciting time at the University of Michigan-Flint. It's a time of new beginnings for many students and new faculty members and always a time filled with promise for the discoveries the new year will bring. This year there also is the promise that some segment of our university community will become ill with H1N1 flu (formerly called swine flu). It is that concern that we want to address in this message.

There has been a low but steady level of H1N1 illness, and public health officials expect this level to increase in the fall as students return to the classroom at the University of Michigan three campuses and across the country. Federal, state and local health data indicate that the continuing level of H1N1 illness is comparable in severity to what we would normally see with the typical seasonal flu. The difference now is that this is a new virus, for which we have no inherent immunity or vaccine (although a vaccine may be ready as soon as late October or early November).

It's important to note that most of those who become ill are getting mild to moderate cases of the flu and they are recovering fully in a week or less, without any medical intervention.

Still, it is important to neither over-react nor under-react to this situation.

As students return in the weeks ahead, we are encouraging all in the university community to take the necessary steps to avoid the flu. We'll outline those steps for you here and also ask you to consider how you might adjust your classroom teaching to the possibility that large numbers of students could be sick and unable to attend class for three to five days.

When flu hits campus

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines flu-like illness this way: A fever of 100.4 F (38.0 C) or greater, plus a cough or sore throat and possibly other symptoms like runny nose, body aches, headaches, chills, fatigue, vomiting or diarrhea.

The CDC recommends this approach to treating the flu on university campuses:

- Isolation until 24 hours after the ill person is free of fever (100 degrees F) without using fever-lowering medications. In most cases this will require an isolation period of three to five days. This new recommendation is a reduction from the previous seven-day isolation

period. Isolation helps the ill person recover faster and helps to prevent the spread of the flu.

- Treatment of ill individuals with the prescription drug Tamiflu is recommended only if there is an underlying health condition (severe asthma, diabetes, HIV disease, immune deficiency) or the individual is considered high risk (pregnant, over age 65). University Health Service physicians will not prescribe Tamiflu for students who do not meet the CDC guidelines.

Stay home when ill

That's the advice for faculty, staff and students who become ill with the flu. If you become ill yourself or if you must stay home to care for ill family members, please notify your department chair or dean about classes you will have to cancel or reschedule. Your chair or dean can discuss with you if a colleague might be able to cover your classes while you are away. Also, we request that you or someone in your department email your students to make them aware of any class cancellations as soon as possible.

Students also may miss classes, and we are asking you to be prepared to answer student inquiries about making up work or taking incompletes. There may be many more requests than usual for these kinds of accommodations. It is important for you to consider how you could treat all students equitably, even if faced with numerous requests.

Should a student become ill and need to miss classes for several days, we have asked students to contact their instructors directly to request an accommodation. You can expect that students who are healthy enough to communicate but confined with the flu may want to contact you online so they do not fall behind in their work. You may want to consider moving more of your teaching to Blackboard to help them.

Because we expect the severity of the H1N1 strain of flu to be similar to that of seasonal flu, we also expect the university will continue with classes and other scheduled activities. Of course, university experts in influenza will continue to collaborate with local, state and federal health officials and be prepared to follow any new recommendations.

Finally, we want you to know that we are recommending that if any students become ill with the flu before classes begin this fall, they should stay home and not come to campus until they are symptom free for 24 hours. Students are asked to contact the Vice Chancellor for Student Services and Enrollment Management.

Stay informed

Those of us working on H1N1 preparedness and response pledge to do our best to keep the university community healthy and safe as well as informed.

As developments warrant, you can expect additional e-mail messages. We also have linked to several Web pages where you will find the latest advice from medical experts

at the University of Michigan and from agencies like the CDC and the World Health Organization.

We welcome your questions at this e-mail address: fluquestions@umflint.edu, and we will do our best to provide answers promptly or point you toward the appropriate resources.

Vahid Lotfi
Interim Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

Robert Stach
Faculty Council Chair
Professor and Chair, Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry

Additional resources:

Information on the UM-Flint response to the flu:
<http://www.umflint.edu/emergency>

Information on the UM response to the flu:
<http://www.vpcomm.umich.edu/pa/key/flu-H1N1.html>

Genesee County Health Department
<http://www.gchd.us/HotTopics/H1N1Flu.asp>

Information on the flu from U.S. health officials:
www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/

Recommendations for colleges and universities:
http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance/guidelines_colleges.htm

Resources on teaching during a flu outbreak:
<http://www.crlt.umich.edu/flu/>

Flu-related questions are welcome at this e-mail address:
fluquestions@umflint.edu