

## Recommendations of the 7th European Meeting of Influenza and Its Prevention

**Key words:** Influenza, Pandemic, Recommendations

The above-mentioned meeting was held in Berlin, 22–24 September 1993. The participants of the meeting included virologists, epidemiologists and public health specialists from 13 countries in Europe (Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Switzerland, United Kingdom), and also from Australia, Canada and the USA.

The main topic discussed at the meeting was planning for influenza pandemic in Europe. The main recommendations emerging from the presentations and discussions were as follows:

### 1. *Recommendations for the Ministry of Public Health of European countries*

It is recommended that countries in Europe each develop an influenza pandemic preparedness plan and establish a national committee to oversee pandemic planning activities. The pandemic plan for each country should include the following:

- a) a priority list for the target groups that should receive influenza vaccine;
- b) the estimated number of doses of influenza vaccine that will be necessary to meet the needs of the priority target groups that have been identified;
- c) information concerning arrangements with national or regional vaccine manufacturers for the purchase of the requisite number of doses of vaccine. Countries without national manufacturers should obtain bilateral agreements with outside manufacturers to obtain vaccine. Such agreements should be signed and guaranteed by the involved governments. To ensure vaccine availability for the purchasing country even under a national influenza emergency situation declared in the manufacturing country, such agreements should be secure against unilateral cancellation by referring to such an influenza emergency.
- d) a plan to encourage government purchase of influenza vaccine and government assumption of liability associated with the vaccine programme. This will ensure that the largest possible number of doses of vaccine will be produced;

- e) a plan for rapid approval and licensing of a monovalent influenza vaccine in a pandemic situation;
- f) recommendations for the prophylactic use of the antivirals (amantadine and rimantadine) in the face of a pandemic. There should also be a blueprint for stockpiling antiviral drugs for use in the event of an influenza pandemic;
- g) a blueprint for strengthening and expanding upon the existing national infrastructure for the surveillance and control of influenza;
- h) a national plan for communicating with the media and a national plan for education of medical personnel.

It is recommended that each country calculate the impact of an influenza pandemic causing illness of at least 25% of the population.

### 2. *Recommendations for influenza vaccine manufacturers*

- a) It is recommended that influenza vaccine manufacturers develop plans that will enable them to ensure large scale production of a monovalent influenza vaccine within approximately 2 months of notification of the needs;
- b) it is recommended that influenza vaccine manufacturers, regulatory authorities and health authorities work very closely together during a pandemic situation.

### 3. *Recommendations for research*

- a) It is recommended that efforts be made to develop the technology necessary for tissue culture production of influenza vaccines. This includes the development of a suitable high yield donor strain for making high growth reassortants;
- b) it is recommended that studies be initiated to examine adverse events and the emergence of drug-resistant influenza viruses during long term (3 months) prophylaxis of influenza with antivirals (amantadine/rimantadine).
- c) it is recommended that alternative agents to amantadine/rimantadine which have different mechanisms of antiviral activity be developed;
- d) it is recommended that efforts be made to develop

new strong and safe adjuvants which will increase the immunogenicity of a single dose of influenza vaccine;

4. *Recommendations for WHO*

- a) WHO should distribute the pandemic plans developed in Canada, the United Kingdom and other countries to the European countries as examples for country plans;
- b) WHO should strive to increase influenza surveillance in the southern part of China in which influenza pandemic strains have arisen, and in some other parts of the world where little information is available;
- c) WHO should organize a network of laboratories for surveillance of animal influenza viruses, which can play an important role in the emergence of human influenza pandemic strains;
- d) WHO should arrange and coordinate studies on

the development of tissue culture influenza vaccine, as a vaccine which can be produced in mass doses in a short period;

- e) WHO should prepare a plan for the rapid identification of a novel potential pandemic influenza strain and for a rapid declaration of a potential pandemic situation.

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