

## Viral evolution: Influenza evolves - From rhetoric to reality?

In the recent times, several important events have taken place in the dominion of the human being and his backdrop. The man has been a spectator of tremendous share of advancements and developments over the years. However, the destitutions and natural hardships reckon the doors the very same time. The first natural catastrophe was witnessed during the epidemic outbreak of HIV infection. In recent times, the 2014 Ebola epidemic was the largest in the history affecting multiple countries in West Africa. However, the spread was contained, and no further spread was reported in any of the countries. However in India, the swine flu has created havoc.

As the swine flu death toll rose to 1319 deaths in India within 7 weeks, the world was stricken with terror. News shows considered a worldwide epidemic with millions of predicted infection. The Associated press referred to "The epicenter of the outbreak" - making it sound as if a nuclear bomb had gone off. Tuesday's newspapers warned, "Outbreak threatens the global recovery." The drudge report's banner headline cried out: "Cough Fear!" Swine flu deaths have breached the 1000 mark with more people succumbing to the H1N1 virus while the number of those affected crossed 22,000 today with the government admitting that it was facing a shortage of laboratories for testing of the disease.

Some perspective is needed. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, USA, the seasonal flu infects 28 million to 56 million peoples each year. Of these, 100,000 are hospitalized and about 36,000 die every year in the world. This averages out to almost 150 deaths a day during the 8 months of a normal flu season.

Watching the melodramatic news, no one would know that there have been swine flu outbreaks with similar strains in the past. A 1976 flu fear was highlighted by a botched government scramble to vaccinate the entire US population. Only one person, an army recruit at Fort Dix, NJ, was killed by the flu, but more people were harmed by the vaccine. Possibly hundreds got Guillain-Barre syndrome, a paralyzing neurological illness. About 25% of the country was vaccinated




before the undertaking was canceled because of safety concerns.

Infectious disease kills a lot more people in developing countries such as India than in developed societies because poorer conditions are conducive to spreading. Scaremongers point to the 1918–1919 Spanish flu pandemic, which left a half million Americans dead, but it is important to remember that health care and living standards were much worse back then. People lived in crowded conditions and often were suffering from other diseases, such as tuberculosis. There were no antibiotics or anti-viral medications. Flu kills primarily through secondary infections-bacterial infections, such as pneumonia. Today, the elderly and other vulnerable groups have greater resistance against bacterial pneumonia because of vaccinations used.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has now raised the level of S-OIV influenza pandemic alert to phase 6 ("the pandemic phase") because of the human-to-human transmission of the virus and the community-level outbreaks world-wide. The WHO also issues its concerns about the global surveillance, the diagnostic capacity for the infection and the pandemic preparedness plan in every country.

Strategies for the dental office include those measures to be taken to provide safe and effective care for patients and a safe work environment for staff, as well as processes, which can be implemented to minimize, to the extent possible.

People in India do not believe in prevention. Get a flu shot every year irrespective of their medical status. However people want to save a couple of hundred on a condition whose testing costs thousands and then they cry out. I know that the efficacy of this year's flu shot is 30%, but that's better than nothing, isn't it? Furthermore, people are very quick at self-diagnosis and do not trust doctors if he/she advises for tests.

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