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Influenza activity remains sporadic in Orange County; consider influenza in your patients with fever and/or respiratory symptoms and test for influenza. The Orange County Health Care Agency is offering free flu vaccines for eligible groups: <http://www.ochealthinfo.com/Public/flu/index.htm>.

- **Survey finds that by mid-November, only 30% of US adults have received the flu shot this season; 53% of the remainder do not plan to get the flu shot at all.** The survey, conducted by the Rand Corporation, found the same flu vaccination rates among health care workers and caregivers (30%), with 57% of the remainder not planning to get vaccinated. Flu vaccination rates among the high risk groups were greater (age 50+ or any high risk condition-37%, asthma patients-33%, chronic lung disease patients-67%). Lack of time was cited as the primary reason (41%) for not getting or planning to get the flu shot this season. Other reasons included perceived lack of need (25%), beliefs against flu shots (20%), fear of illness/side effects (19%), and the perception that others need it more (8%). The full report is at http://www.rand.org/health/projects/flu_survey/. **There is still time to act – get vaccinated now!**
- **College students who received the flu shot had a significantly lower rate of flu-like illness and associated impacts.** Minnesota college students were studied from the 2002-03 through 2005-06 influenza seasons. Influenza vaccination was associated with significant reduction in the likelihood of flu-like illness and provider visits, antibiotic use, impaired school performance, and numbers of missed days of class/work during the influenza season. Differences were not seen during non-influenza periods. For the abstract, see <http://archpedi.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/short/162/12/1113>.
- **Elderly African-Americans and Hispanics have lower influenza vaccination rates compared to elderly Non-Hispanic Whites.** The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) Public Policy Institute reports that in 2006, among people aged 65 years and older, only 47% of African-Americans and 45% of Hispanics received the flu shot compared to 67% of Non-Hispanic Whites. The gap is even wider for pneumococcal vaccine; both of these vaccines are covered by Medicare. The report encourages education of all patients about the benefits of vaccination and prioritization of adult vaccination by health care providers and systems. See http://www.aarp.org/research/medicare/coverage/i12_flu.html.
- **Half-dose trivalent inactivated influenza vaccine (TIV) generates immune response.** Antibody responses to specific influenza strains were elicited by half-doses of TIV in healthy, previously immunized young adults, especially women. Although it is not clear if the antibody titer cut-off used in the study would be protective against infection, further research could help elucidate if the strategy of half-doses would be useful to extend the vaccine supply during a critical shortage. For abstract, see <http://archinte.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/short/168/22/2405>.
- **U.S. Health and Human Services releases draft national vaccine strategy.** The plan describes the need to organize, practice, and evaluate mass vaccination activities for various scenarios including an influenza pandemic. Next steps involve input from the public, vaccine industry, and other stakeholders. The plan will be finalized in late 2009. The draft plan is available at http://www.hhs.gov/nvpo/vacc_plan/.

Orange County, California, and U.S. **

- To date this season, 11 influenza reports have been received in OC: 6 A (includes 1 subtyped as A/H1), 3 B, and 1 A/B unspecified.
- Influenza activity in California remains sporadic. Overall influenza activity remains low in the U.S. with no states reporting regional or widespread activity.

Avian Influenza Update

- New human H5N1 cases have been reported in Cambodia (1) and Indonesia (2) since the last update. The cumulative number of cases for 2008 is now 390, with a mortality rate of 63%. For the latest WHO H5N1 updates, see www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/en/.

****Note:** The number of reported cases does NOT correspond to the total number of cases occurring in OC as not all labs participate, the surveillance programs are not population based, and testing may be influenced by many factors such as public interest. However, the trends in influenza activity are likely to be reflected accurately.

Recommended Resources	
CDC: http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/ ;	
OC: http://www.ochealthinfo.com/epi/flu/surveillance.htm ;	
CA: http://www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/dcdc/VRDL/html/FLU/Fluintro.htm ;	
HHS: http://www.pandemicflu.gov/ ; General: http://www.cdc.gov/flu	