



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **FEDERAL HEALTH AND COMMUNITY LEADERS JOIN FORCES TO PROVIDE CRITICAL INFORMATION TO ASIAN AMERICAN & PACIFIC ISLANDER COMMUNITIES ON THE H1N1 FLU**

The Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF); the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health (OMH); the National Council of Asian and Pacific Islander Physicians (NCAPIP); and the Association of Asian and Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO), have joined together to inform Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities about the H1N1 flu virus and precautions they can take to minimize the spread of the virus.

H1N1 (previously referred to as “swine flu”) is a new influenza virus causing illness in people. This virus is spreading from person-to-person, probably in much the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread. OMH, APIAHF, NCAPIP, and AAPCHO are working together to ensure timely, accurate, and appropriate information about the H1N1 flu is effectively communicated to AAPI communities

Dr. Garth Graham, Director of OMH explained that symptoms of H1N1 flu are similar to symptoms of seasonal flu with fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills, and fatigue. Some people have also reported diarrhea and vomiting. Individuals who experience severe symptoms such as difficulty breathing, chest or abdominal pain, sudden dizziness, or persistent vomiting, should seek immediate medical attention.

“The H1N1 flu can be transmitted through coughing and sneezing, or touching something with the flu virus on it and then touching the mouths, eyes, or noses. Individuals are not at risk for the H1N1 virus through food transmission or by eating pork products,” said Dr. Wilson Ko, President of the Chinese American Medical Society and member of NCAPIP.

OMH, APIAHF, NCAPIP, and AAPCHO are working closely together to monitor the situation and convey critical information to not only AAPI health care networks, but also to community social networks. This is an important step given that AAPI communities experience linguistic and access to care barriers. Census 2000 revealed that 73% of Asian Americans and 35% of Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders spoke a language other than English at home.

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Having limited English proficiency tremendously impacts access to health information and services. Nonelderly AAPIs are more likely to be without a usual source of care compared to non-Hispanic Whites; while rates differ among AAPI populations, 20% of Asian Indians lack a usual source of care.

“We want to let our communities, health care providers, community health leaders, and all individuals who are in contact with AAPI communities know that appropriately translated materials are available in a number of Asian and Pacific Islander languages including Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Tagalog, and Punjabi, among others,” said Dr. Ho Luong Tran, President and CEO of APIAHF. “We are working with AAPI organizations throughout our local networks to compile and disseminate linguistically appropriate information about the H1N1 flu.”

The HHS Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) goals during this public health emergency are to reduce transmission and illness severity, and provide information to assist health care providers, public health officials and the public in addressing the challenges posed by this newly identified influenza virus.

Mr. Jeff Caballero, Executive Director of AAPCHO, urged everyone to follow the CDC prevention guidelines and take these everyday steps to protect their health and lessen the spread of this new virus:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you are sick with a flu-like illness, stay home for 7 days after your symptoms begin or until you have been symptom-free for 24 hours, whichever is longer. This is to keep from infecting others and spreading the virus further.
- Follow public health advice regarding school closures, avoiding crowds and other social distancing measures.
- If you don’t have one yet, consider developing a family emergency plan as a precaution. This should include storing a supply of extra food, medicines, facemasks and other essential supplies.

Dr. Ho Luong Tran commented that there are two influenza antiviral medications that are recommended for use against H1N1 influenza. These are oseltamivir (trade name Tamiflu®) and zanamivir (Relenza®). The priority use for influenza antiviral drugs during this outbreak is to treat severe influenza illness.

For more information on the H1N1 flu and what can be done to protect against it, visit the CDC website at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/> or call 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636).

For information on translated educational materials, contact APIAHF at 415-954-9988.

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