

August 28, 2009

Each issue of AzHHA's *H1N1 Advisory* will include links to useful news about novel H1N1. This issue features links to CDC, CMS and EMTALA information.

**CDC H1N1 Vaccine
Priority Groups**

CMS Provider FAQs

**EMTALA Requirements
& Options for Hospitals
in a Disaster**

Want to add a colleague to AzHHA's *H1N1 Advisory*? Contact AzHHA's Communications Department with the name, title, organization and e-mail address of the co-worker you would like added to the distribution list.

The current distribution list includes AzHHA-member organization disaster preparedness, public relations and public affairs representatives.

H1N1: Arizona's Hospital Community Takes Action

The Arizona Hospital and Healthcare Association (AzHHA) is joining forces with the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) and the state's county public health departments to ensure seamless communication during the upcoming flu season and the novel H1N1 pandemic. Over the coming months, AzHHA will:

- **Launch *H1N1 Advisory*** - Look to this newsletter to keep your clinical, emergency preparedness and public relations teams posted on tools, rules and news related to novel H1N1. *H1N1 Advisory* also will include summaries of outcomes from regional and state conference calls with public health officials and healthcare representatives.
- **Arm Hospitals with Information** - AzHHA is developing an online H1N1 tool kit that will include information for AzHHA members, including Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) documents. The FAQs will address questions specific to hospitals, such as EMTALA and liability issues, as well as provide messages to deliver to patients. The Association is working closely with state and county public health representatives to ensure a consistent statewide message for all key audiences.
- **Address Regulatory Challenges Hospitals Face** - AzHHA will work with state and professional licensure boards to identify hurdles hospitals and medical professionals may encounter as they deliver care during the novel H1N1 pandemic.
- **Keep Open the Communication Channels** - AzHHA will participate in as well as host conference calls with county and state public health officials to ensure ongoing information flow.

Vaccinating Arizonans Against H1N1

ADHS has prioritized target populations for administration of the H1N1 vaccine, as part of its *Novel H1N1 Influenza Distribution Program*. According to ADHS, the latest Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) projections are that Arizona will receive between 800,000 and 1 million doses of the vaccine some time in October, with additional shipments available in November through January. The vaccine that arrives in October will be directed toward:

- children 6 months through 4 years old;
- children 5 through 18 years of age who have chronic medical conditions;

- pregnant women;
- caregivers of newborns; and
- healthcare and emergency medical services personnel with direct patient contact.

As more vaccine arrives in November, the priority list will expand to include:

- all persons ages 6 months to 24 years; and
- persons who have medical conditions that put them at higher risk for influenza-related complications.

In order to qualify to receive the vaccine, healthcare providers must be able to effectively manage, store and administer the vaccine. Hospitals interested in providing vaccines under this prioritization program must complete the pre-registration form. ADHS notes that the pre-registration form is not an order form. It is a tool the Department is using to develop a list of providers interested in participating in the upcoming campaign to vaccinate Arizonans against the H1N1 virus. Providers that pre-register will receive regular electronic updates on the availability of vaccine as well as logistical information about its distribution. Delivery and distribution of the vaccine is being coordinated by Arizona's public health system. The vaccine will be free of charge to providers. Tort liability protection for administration of the vaccine is covered by the Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness (PREP) Act.

Speedier H1N1 Test Results

Getting test results in the hands of practitioners faster was the motivation of a recent decision by Arizona State Laboratory officials. H1N1 test results for hospitalized patients now will be faxed—rather than mailed—by the state laboratory to hospital infection control departments or laboratories. The delay in receiving official test results has not delayed treatment. However, hospital and public health officials agreed faster test results would reduce patient anxiety.

Caring for Patients During the Novel H1N1 Pandemic

On Aug. 25, hospital clinical leaders and public health officials participated in a conference call to discuss the novel H1N1 pandemic. Meeting participants agreed to:

- request that AzHHA and ADHS collaborate on an in-depth review of the novel H1N1 clinical guidelines published by the CDC in order to provide Arizona hospital caregivers with clearer direction;
- ask state public health officials to assess the reliability of the rapid H1N1 test; and
- request that major announcements regarding novel H1N1 be channeled to AzHHA for distribution to hospital public relations executives.

On the licensure and regulatory fronts, AzHHA is meeting with ADHS staff members and representatives from professional licensing boards to discuss regulatory challenges hospitals may face this fall with a new wave of novel H1N1 flu patients. The agenda includes regulatory flexibility during the novel H1N1 pandemic for hospitals to:

- re-assign staff for specific patient services;

- tap unlicensed hospital space as patient care areas (e.g., emergency triage tents);
- alter acuity staffing plan requirements; and
- treat, when appropriate, pediatric patients in facilities without pediatric units.

For more information, contact AzHHA's Debbie Johnston (602-445-4300, ext. 4304, or djohnston@azhha.org).

Media-Medical Spokespersons Wanted!

AzHHA is searching for medical professionals—physicians, registered nurses, infection control experts and others—to participate in media interviews or to give presentations during the upcoming flu season and the ongoing novel H1N1 pandemic. Please forward the survey link below to the individuals you would like to participate as spokespersons, along with a copy of this article. Medical professionals from Maricopa County who volunteer also will be contacted by public information representatives from the Maricopa County Department of Public Health for interviews and/or presentations. For more information, contact AzHHA's Bridget O'Gara (602-445-4300, ext. 4318, or bogara@azhha.org).

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=Ix_2bjjKHoDF9QHen7w9Df_2bQ_3d_3d