



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

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**UPDATE ON NOVEL INFLUENZA A (H1N1)
DOH CONFIRMS FIRST DEATH INVOLVING H1N1 FLU**

HONOLULU – The Hawai'i State Department of Health (DOH) today confirmed that novel H1N1 influenza infection likely contributed to underlying medical conditions that caused the death of an adult in his/her late 60's on June 19 at Tripler Army Medical Center. The O'ahu resident is the first death in Hawai'i associated with the new flu strain and one of over a hundred reported nationwide over the last two months. No further information about the patient's medical condition before death or identification will be released due to patient privacy considerations and federal law.

The first hospitalization of an adult with novel H1N1 influenza within the state was confirmed on June 27. The O'ahu resident with underlying health issues developed pneumonia as a complication of their H1N1 infection. The individual is responding to treatment and recovering in the hospital.

"These two new severe cases of novel H1N1 are a sad reminder of the seriousness of influenza, particularly for those at-risk for complications," said Dr. Sarah Park, chief of the DOH Disease Outbreak Control Division. "Unfortunately, we knew this would happen eventually, as we have flu-related deaths and hospitalizations every year from regular seasonal influenza."

Dr. Park added, "The influenza infection itself was not the primary cause of death in this case, it was a contributing factor to the patient's already declining condition due to multiple serious health issues."

(more)

Cases of novel H1N1 influenza have been identified on the islands of O'ahu, Maui, Hawai'i, Kaua'i, and Moloka'i with the majority of cases confirmed on O'ahu. The DOH is currently investigating a cluster of cases of novel H1N1 influenza A on Moloka'i. The DOH has been working with local organizations to provide information to the community on prevention measures, and will be sending public health staff to the island of Moloka'i tomorrow to conduct additional education and outreach efforts due to this new outbreak.

Dr. Park said, "It is so important that we all continue to consider and plan for the impact a flu pandemic can have on our workplaces, schools, and communities."

The DOH has confirmed a total of 545 cases of novel H1N1 since May 5, 2009. Of these cases, all but three have recovered or are recovering at home with no complications. One adult resident is hospitalized on O'ahu; one adult that resides on Maui became ill after traveling to Washington state in May, was hospitalized and recovered in Washington before returning home; and one death occurred on O'ahu as a result of complications from the flu.

As with any influenza, the public is reminded to take the following steps to prevent spreading illness to others:

- Stay at home when you are sick; isolate yourself from others whenever possible;
- Cover you cough or sneeze with a tissue and dispose of used tissues;
- Wash your hands frequently, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer;
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth;
- Seek care if you have influenza-like illness; and
- Stay healthy by eating a balanced diet, drinking plenty of water and getting plenty of rest and exercise.

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