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To all Medical Practitioners

## Swine Influenza (H1N1)

The United States Centres for Diseases Prevention and Control (CDC) in Atlanta have confirmed cases of swine influenza A(H1N1) in humans in Texas and California. The cases had presented with mild respiratory symptoms and the disease was self-limiting. However, as none of the cases had contact with pigs, human-to-human transmission is suspected.

This unusual situation requires particular vigilance also because of an ongoing swine influenza outbreak in Mexico that is currently being investigated by Mexican local health authorities together with CDC Atlanta and World Health Organization (WHO). There were no cases reported in Europe or in other regions. It is too early to say whether this will lead to a larger outbreak or could represent the appearance of a potential pandemic strain of influenza virus.

Swine influenza is an acute viral infection of the respiratory tract in pgs; subclinical infections are common. The mortality is low and recovery usually occurs within 7-10 days. A typical swine flu outbreak is characterized by a rapid onset of high fever, dullness, loss of appetite, laboured abdominal breathing and coughing, but there can also be unapparent outbreaks. Swine origin influenza viruses also occur in wild birds, poultry, horses and humans, but interspecies transmission is considered a rare event. A document with questions and answers on human swine influenza is available on ECDC's website and the Centre will continue to update information on a daily basis:

[http://ecdc.europa.eu/en/files/pdf/Health\\_topics/TA\\_Swine\\_influenza\\_US-090424\\_1900hrs.pdf](http://ecdc.europa.eu/en/files/pdf/Health_topics/TA_Swine_influenza_US-090424_1900hrs.pdf)

Clinicians should consider swine influenza infection in the differential diagnosis of patients according to the attached case definition. Patients who meet these criteria are to be defined as people under investigation and should be tested for influenza. All doctors who encounter a suspicious case should contact the Infectious Disease Prevention and Control Unit for assessment and the necessary testing. Tel: 23266000/21332235/25450000. Persons with febrile respiratory illness should be advised to stay at home and refrain from going to work or school to avoid spread to others in their communities. In addition, frequent hand washing can lessen the spread of respiratory illness.

WHO, ECDC and CDC have not recommended that people avoid travel to affected areas at this time. Recommendations found at <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/content/SwineFluUS.aspx> will help travellers reduce risk of infection and stay healthy.

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