

WFH statement on possible swine flu pandemic

April 29, 2009 – Health authorities around the world are warning about the risk of “swine flu,” a form of influenza virus. Although this potential pandemic is cause for general concern, the virus in question poses no threat to the safety of plasma-derived medicinal products such as clotting factor concentrates. The influenza virus is a lipid enveloped virus and is inactivated by common methods such as pasteurization and solvent-detergent treatment. Furthermore, plasma donations would not be accepted from donors that show symptoms of the flu such as fever, a cough or general pain. People with the flu are contagious when they have symptoms; after their symptoms have gone, they are no longer likely to infect others. No case of influenza transmitted by transfusion has been reported in the literature.

Any global pandemic could have the effect of reducing the plasma supply if significant numbers of plasma donors showing symptoms of the flu were to be deferred. If swine flu continues to spread around the world, it is possible that, over time, supplies of donated plasma would be affected and this could eventually reduce the supply but not the safety of plasma-derived clotting factor concentrates. The WFH will continue to be vigilant regarding any threat to global safety and supply of treatment products for bleeding disorders.

There is still much that is not known about the current swine flu outbreak. As more information emerges, in particular if the risk to plasma-derived treatment products changes, the WFH will update our community. You can find more information about the swine flu outbreak at these sites:

<http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/index.html>

<http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/index.htm>