



MEETING PROFESSIONALS INTERNATIONAL

Q & A with Dr. Jonathan Spero

November 6, 2009

The H1N1 Flu Pandemic: What Meeting Professionals Need to Know

Q: Can you heal without getting an antiviral?

A: Yes. Your body can fight off the infection without any medications. Antivirals, if given within 48 hours of onset of symptoms can reduce the severity, length and risk of complications of the illness.

Q: Can the regular seasonal flu shot help at all against H1N1?

A: No.

Q: Once you get it, and recover, can you get it again? Like another strain?

A: Yes. After an illness, the human body produces antibodies that offer a level of protection from being re-infected from viruses. However, since influenza viruses are constantly mutating, if you are exposed to a different strain of the same virus, it is possible that you could get sick again.

Q: How effective are hand cleaners like Purel in a crowded convention center setting?

A: They are very effective in reducing hand to nose/mouth infections.

Q: Does MPI have tools (letters, contingency plans) that we can use to communicate (not scare) a "preventative personal care" message leading up to a major conference?

A: InHouse Physicians can provide these tools as part of our pandemic preparedness tool kit for meetings. If you would like more information, please contact us at 800-356-3627.

Q: Should planners discuss with hotels their plan to clean/disinfect sleeping rooms?

A: Most major hotels do a good job of cleaning surfaces in hotel rooms. However, it cannot hurt to ask in your pre-con what type of infection control measures they take when cleaning hotel rooms.

Q: Can you tell the hotel that someone was sick?

A: If someone is diagnosed with Influenza A, you have a responsibility to let the hotel know. However, this is an ethical responsibility, not a legal responsibility.

Q: Any advice on flying?

A: Bring hand sanitizers, wash your hands frequently, keep an N95 mask handy in case you are next to a sick person. Get plenty of rest before you fly and during your trip. Sleep deprivation inhibits your immune system. Also, use a saline nasal spray during travel. This keeps your nasal mucous membranes moist and allows your body to get rid of particles that may contain viruses.

Q: Do health agencies have the authority to quarantine a hotel or convention center?

A: They do have this authority in the U.S. and internationally. However, the U.S. authorities would not do this unless the situation was extreme. Outside of the U.S., especially in Asia, this has happened this year and will probably happen again.