

September 15, 2009

Drug resistant H1N1 case confirmed

Alberta Health Services has recorded a single case of drug resistant pandemic (H1N1) 2009 virus.

The patient was being treated for laboratory confirmed pandemic (H1N1) 2009 infection. The resistance was identified from an additional sample that was taken in mid-August while the patient was being monitored and treated for another condition. Further isolate testing at the National Microbiology Laboratory in Winnipeg confirmed this sample was oseltamivir-resistant. Oseltamivir is an antiviral medication mainly used to treat individuals infected with influenza.

“This is significant because oseltamivir or Tamiflu is the medication that is most commonly used to treat influenza around the world,” says Dr. Gerry Predy, Senior Medical Officer of Health, Alberta Health Services. “Any resistance to medication is important because it could possibly lead to further cases of resistant disease and potentially impact how a disease spreads. However, this local discovery does not change our course of planning for pandemic (H1N1) 2009 or the treatment of patients with seasonal or pandemic influenza,” adds Predy.

An investigation into this case is underway to determine if the drug resistant organism was present at the start of patient’s illness or if it developed during treatment.

Other isolated cases of drug resistant pandemic (H1N1) 2009 are being reported around the world and have also been noted in some clinical drug trials. This is being monitored by the World Health Organization.

“This case does highlight why we must continue to monitor the pandemic (H1N1) 2009 virus and share these findings with our national and international colleagues”, says Predy.

The patient was not hospitalized for pandemic influenza, but was treated with oseltamivir. The patient is recovering and is no longer displaying symptoms. Follow-up testing will confirm if the patient is now free of the virus.

Alberta Health Services is the provincial health authority responsible for planning and delivering health supports and services for more than 3.5 million adults and children living in Alberta. Its mission is to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.

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