Influenza A(H1N1) in Scotland situation report

Health Protection Scotland (HPS) is working with the Health Protection Agency (HPA), NHS Scotland and the Scottish and UK Governments to monitor the current situation and the threat it poses to UK public health. At 12 noon on Tuesday 9 June 2009 the latest information was that the total number of confirmed cases of Influenza A(H1N1) in Scotland was 264. Total number of probable cases of Influenza A(H1N1) in Scotland was 0 and the total number of possible cases of Influenza A(H1N1) in Scotland was 380.

Further advice and guidance on Influenza A(H1N1) is available on the Scottish Government website www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/924/0080955.pdf.

The Scottish Government has advised anyone in Scotland who develops flu-like symptoms or who has recently returned from one of the affected areas and is worried about their health to contact NHS 24 on 08454 242424.

Influenza A (H1N1) Ministerial Advice

Health Secretary Nicola Sturgeon MSP has urged people to continue taking sensible hygiene precautions. Speaking last week Ms Sturgeon stated that the excellent response from our public health teams means new cases of the virus are being detected quickly and went on to advise the media that where new cases are being identified, Health Protection Scotland and public health officials are moving quickly to trace contacts and treat people appropriately. We are also continuing to plan and prepare for any future eventuality. Ms Sturgeon reassured the Scottish public by advising that Scotland’s experience is comparable to many other countries and there is no need for people to be unduly worried.

Congratulations to Young Samanyika

Young Samanyika, the Malawian Environmental Health Officer who visited Scotland on a REHIS sponsored visit in association with the University of Strathclyde and South Lanarkshire Council last year, has been awarded a Commonwealth Professional Fellowship 2009/10 by the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission. This is a very prestigious award and is a reflection of the esteem in which Young is held in Malawi and Scotland. Young will return to Scotland for a twelve week study period which will include placements with the University of Strathclyde, South Lanarkshire Council and REHIS. Dr Tony Grimason of the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow has worked closely with Young and nominated him for the Fellowship. Congratulations, Young!

Superbug supremo selected

Susan Brimelow has been appointed as the Chief Inspector of the Healthcare Environment Inspectorate and will spearhead a programme of unannounced hospital inspections throughout the NHS in Scotland. Ms Brimelow, currently the Care Commission’s healthcare regulation director, will lead inspection teams to ensure infection control measures, and the hospital environment generally, are of the highest standard. Plans are in hand to test the new inspection model in two NHS Boards this summer before the full programme of inspections starts in September. Every acute hospital will receive at least one planned and one random visit within the three year inspection cycle, with extra visits as required. The Healthcare Environment Inspectorate will operate independently of the Scottish Government and the NHS Boards which it will inspect but, for administrative purposes, is based within NHS Quality Improvement Scotland with an annual budget in excess of £1 million. Inspections will focus on infection control practice (from screening to discharge), hygiene and
cleanliness standards, waste management, the fabric of the building and accommodation, standards of essential equipment and on access arrangements for visitors. The Scottish Government is investing £54 million (over three years) in a range of initiatives designed to tackle healthcare associated infections. These include a national MRSA screening programme, prudent prescribing of antibiotics, zero tolerance on hand hygiene and a single web portal to give access to national and local information on C.diff and MRSA rates.

Health Groups call for end to tobacco displays

The Scottish Coalition on Tobacco has called on MSPs to back the Tobacco and Primary Medical Services (Scotland) Bill and ban promotional displays of cigarettes and vending machines. Speaking on the final day that oral evidence was given to the Scottish Parliament Health and Sport Committee, the Chair of SCOT, Sheila Duffy told the Committee that "tobacco is a lethal product that kills half of its long term users. Nearly a quarter of all deaths in Scotland are caused by smoking and thousands of others are affected by smoking-related diseases. New research shows that smoking costs the NHS in Scotland £409 million a year. Yet we allow the tobacco industry to grab pride of place in our shops to advertise its lethal products. No other harmful or age-restricted product is as visible or available as tobacco through large promotional displays and self-service vending machines. Our MSPs can put an end to that by supporting the Tobacco and Primary Medical Services Bill which will remove large displays which allow tobacco companies to advertise their products to young people and seek to recruit new smokers. The Bill will also ban cigarette vending machines which are a source of cigarettes for 10% of 15 year old smokers. We have the ridiculous anomaly of spending hundreds of millions every year on treating the effects of smoking yet we allow the product that causes that harm to be highly visible and available. All parties have health policies which seek to prevent young people starting to smoke and encourage smokers to quit, so it is incumbent on all our MSPs to support the aims of the Tobacco Bill which will not only stop the advertising of tobacco to our young people, but will also introduce stricter sanctions against retailers that continually sell tobacco to those under age. Around two thirds of smokers start under the age of 18, and almost 40% under the age of 16. The younger someone starts, the harder it is to quit, the more heavily they are likely to smoke, and the likelihood of harm increased. A child who starts smoking at age 14 or younger is five times more likely to die of lung cancer than someone who starts smoking at age 24 or older, and around fifteen times more likely than someone who never smokes. Tobacco marketing through promotional displays is one of the contributing factors to children experimenting with cigarettes. The Tobacco Bill measures can prevent young people smoking by reducing the availability and visibility of cigarettes to our young people. We urge all MSPs to support this Bill and make a real difference to the health of our future generations. Anything less will fail our children."

The Scottish Coalition on Tobacco (SCOT) is a dynamic collaboration of partners which campaigns on all matters related to tobacco and health. Members include ASH Scotland, British Heart Foundation, British Medical Association, Cancer Research UK, Macmillan Cancer Support, Royal College of Nursing, The Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation, Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, and the Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland. SCOT aims to further reduce the harm caused by tobacco in Scotland and to campaign for better tobacco control.

Summit to tackle alcohol misuse

An ‘Alcohol Summit’ to discuss how forthcoming legislation can change the country’s relationship with drink will be held in Edinburgh on Monday, June 22 and will bring together politicians, health experts, academics, the alcohol industry and retailers. Under discussion will be the measures outlined in the Scottish Government’s Alcohol Framework, published on 2 March this year following a public consultation. These include setting a minimum price at which a unit of alcohol can be sold, banning off-sales promotions, placing a duty on licensing boards to consider raising their off-sales purchase age to 21 and establishing a Social Responsibility Fee. The Scottish Government now intends to bring forward the proposals as part of a parliamentary bill later this year.
Manures guidance published

The Food Standards Agency has published guidance on managing farm manures to help reduce the number of consumers that get food poisoning from ready-to-eat crops. Farm manures that are applied to agricultural land to meet crop nutrient requirements and improve soil fertility can contain pathogenic micro-organisms responsible for causing foodborne illness. These micro-organisms include *E. coli* O157, salmonella, listeria and campylobacter.

Storage and use of farm manures must therefore be managed to reduce the risks of contaminating crops. This is particularly important for ready-to-eat fruit and vegetables that will be eaten raw. The guidance aims to provide UK growers with practical advice on how to reduce the risk of contamination of ready-to-eat crops when using farm manures to improve soil fertility. The guidance can be found on the FSA website [www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/manuresguidance.pdf](http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/manuresguidance.pdf).

Health and Safety Executive Strategy

The HSE has recently published the final version of the new Health and Safety Executive strategy. This strategy has been finalised following a three-month consultation programme, with events held across the country and the HSE believes that the strategy represents a clear statement of core principles and a sensible approach to health and safety in Great Britain. The strategy can be found on the HSE’s website [www.hse.gov.uk/strategy/strategy09.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/strategy/strategy09.htm).

FSA Update on products free of colours associated with hyperactivity

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has updated its list of product ranges that do not contain the six food colours associated with possible hyperactivity in young children. A further two manufacturers producing product lines free of the colours have been added to the list.

The list includes both companies whose product ranges have never contained the six colours and product ranges that have been reformulated to remove the colours. The colours, identified by a Southampton University study financed by the Food Standards Agency, are sunset yellow FCF (E110), quinoline yellow (E104), carmoisine (E122), allura red (E129), tartrazine (E102) and ponceau 4R (E124). The product lines added to the list are Fox’s biscuit products, manufactured by Northern Foods, and Thorntons products, manufactured by Thorntons plc.

The FSA is publicising the product ranges to encourage the food industry to participate in the voluntary ban. The voluntary ban was agreed to by Ministers late last year. Consumers who are particularly concerned about the presence of the colours should continue to check labels, especially in the case of products with a long shelf-life where the availability of reformulated products may vary. The Agency’s website [www.food.gov.uk](http://www.food.gov.uk) will be updated regularly as new information is provided.

2nd All African Environmental Health Congress

The International Federation of Environmental Health (IFEH) in collaboration with the Government of Malawi and the University of Malawi welcomes the submission of abstracts for papers to be presented at the 2nd IFEH Africa Group All African Environmental Health Congress to be held in Lilongwe, Malawi from 24 to 27 May 2010. The vision of the Congress is the improvement of the standards of environmental health in Africa and the objectives of the Congress are to raise the profile of environmental health in Africa, to share best practices of environmental health services delivery in Africa, to enhance inter-country collaboration in environmental health practice, to address the training needs of environmental health, to promote the environmental health needs of children in Africa and to promote environmental health research. Full information is available at [www.poly.ac.mw/2aaehcongress](http://www.poly.ac.mw/2aaehcongress).

If you wish to feature any Environmental Health or Public Health initiative, event or activity in the REHIS Newsletter, please contact Tom Bell, Chief Executive, on 0131 225 6999 or tb@rehis.com