



PIMA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT  
COMMUNICABLE DISEASE PREVENTION, SUITE 1340  
3950 S. COUNTRY CLUB RD, SUITE 100 • TUCSON, AZ 85714-2056  
(520) 243-7797 FAX (520) 791-0366

December 17, 2008

Dear Clinician:

We are at the beginning of this year's influenza season, and it is a good time to make sure that we are doing as much as possible to prevent influenza as well as to care for those presenting with respiratory symptoms.

As the measles outbreak earlier this year taught us, it is extremely important for health care workers, including office staff in reception areas of medical offices and clinics, to be adequately vaccinated. I encourage you to take steps to assure that your staff has access to flu vaccine and are advised of the importance of vaccination. I would also like to remind you that the CDC has extended their priority grouping to include all healthy children between the ages of 6 months and 18 years of age. The supply of influenza vaccine is good and should present no barriers to vaccination this year.

I would like to call your attention to an announcement in last week's MMWR where the CDC reported that a preliminary analysis of 25 Influenza A (H1N1) isolates showed 24 of them to be resistant to oseltamavir (Tamiflu®); all were susceptible to zanamivir (Relenza®). Five influenza A (H3N2) isolates and 9 influenza B isolates were found to be sensitive to both oseltamavir and zanamivir. While the CDC has made no formal recommendations in response to these findings in a relatively small number of samples collected from a narrow geographic area, the Arizona Department of Health Services has sent out a Health Advisory recommending the following:

- Use zanamivir (Relenza®) for influenza treatment, unless the influenza type and/or subtype is known to not be A (H1N1) or unless zanamivir is contraindicated\*
- In situations where zanamivir cannot be used and influenza A cannot be excluded, a combination of oseltamavir and an adamantane, such as either amantadine (Symmetrel®) or rimantadine (Flumadine®) would be needed to provide full empiric influenza coverage.

\*Zanamivir is not licensed for chemoprophylaxis in children under 5 years old, or for treatment of patients under 7 years old, and it is not recommended in patients with chronic cardiopulmonary conditions.

For more information, see Prevention of Influenza. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, August 8, 2008, <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/rr/rr5707.pdf> and Update: Influenza Activity --- United States, September 28--November 29, 2008. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, December 12, 2008 <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5749a3.htm>.

Finally, I would like to remind you that every year our Emergency Departments experience severe overload during flu season. As you may recall, last February hit our community particularly hard. Please consider extending your availability for acute care visits, especially

outside of “normal” working hours during the flu season to help shift the burden of some of the care of persons with respiratory symptoms away from our overcrowded Emergency Departments. Your response to this request last year was fantastic and seemed to make a difference. I would recommend that you implement such revised scheduling by the middle of January.

Please feel free to contact us with any questions, concerns, or recommendations for improving our community’s response to the yearly influenza season.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michelle McDonald, MD". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small flourish at the end.

Michelle McDonald, MD  
Chief Medical Officer  
Pima County Health Department