

PURPOSE

To improve epidemic/pandemic of influenza preparedness, in order to minimize the number and severity of the sick and the number of deaths, in annual epidemics of influenza and in case of a pandemic.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Plan refer to:

1. Influenza Surveillance:

- To collect data on circulating strains of the virus in comparison with the composition of the vaccine
- To describe the population that is affected, in order to facilitate the identification of high-risk groups and to compare them with other population groups and periods of influenza activity.
- To detect unusual cases or types of the virus, or unusual distribution or severity of the disease in the population
- To monitor the progress of the pandemic, based on the phases described by WHO

2. Planning and diagnosis of Influenza Cases:

A. To upgrade the diagnostic capabilities for Influenza

- To nominate and develop Nicosia General Hospital as National Influenza Center and Microbiology Reference Laboratory for Influenza
- Use of commercial rapid antigen detection kits by the rest of the hospitals
- To develop protocols for safe collection, keeping and transport of respiratory specimens and blood
- To ensure reference laboratory availability

B. Clinical Management of Influenza Cases

To ensure effective and safe treatment of suspected human cases of a new influenza strain, by developing clinical protocols related to the diagnosis and management of these cases

C. Infection control in the health care setting

Main aim is the prevention and control of the disease spread in the hospital setting.

3. Preventing the spread of the disease in the community

A. Public Health Measures

- To make recommendations regarding public health measures such as quarantine, cancellation of public gatherings and closures of schools
- To encourage planning and coordination at all levels of government regarding the potential impact of these measures

B. Vaccines program

- Provision of safe and effective vaccination program for influenza during the interpandemic period
- Storage, distribution and in time administration of influenza vaccine
- Monitoring of the safety and effectiveness of the influenza vaccination program

C. Program for the use of antivirals

- Development of a protocol for the use of antivirals during the pandemic
- To facilitate programming in order to ensure the distribution of the available antivirals to the appropriate groups of the population

4. Medical and Public Health Services preparedness

- To get data of the possible number of patients who are going to need in-patient medical care, care in an intensive care unit or on a respirator
- To estimate the possible duration of patient' s stay in the hospital, by age group

- To estimate the possible number of beds that are going to be needed
- To nominate the hospitals, those are going to provide in-patient care of the patients.
- To plan for the medical examination and treatment of patients
- To estimate the number of the staff, the medical equipment and the resources that are going to be used
- To plan the way to communicate with the authorities, the personnel, the relatives of the patients and the public in general.

5. Communication

The quick and accurate communication of all activities of the Ministry of Health, to the various levels, as well as the way the public should behave in case of a pandemic, in order to minimize any untoward and unpredictable social and economic impact. In particular:

- To ensure the existence of communication mechanisms in case of an emergency, at the level of the Ministry of Health or higher
- To keep all stakeholders informed-
- To develop communication channels with the media and the public in relation to epidemic/pandemic preparedness and in particular possible Influenza Pandemic