NEWS UPDATE  1 – 30 April 2015

Objective 1: increase in seasonal vaccine use

Changes in the prevalence of influenza-like illness and influenza vaccine uptake among Hajj pilgrims: A 10-year retrospective analysis of data
14 April 2015 / Vaccine
Alfelali et al.
This analysis suggests that influenza vaccine might be beneficial for Hajj pilgrims. However, controlled trials aided by molecular diagnostic tools could confirm whether such an effect is real or ostensible.

Gynaecologists recommend the influenza vaccination for pregnant women
16 April 2015 / The Times of India
While it has been observed that high risk groups like children are increasingly being administered the vaccination, pregnant women, who are also a high-risk group, are unfortunately not always advised to take this crucial vaccination.

Mortality Attributable to Seasonal Influenza A and B Infections in Thailand, 2005–2009: A Longitudinal Study
20 April 2015 / American Journal of Epidemiology
Cooper et al.
Seasonal influenza infections are associated with substantial mortality in Thailand, but evidence for the strong relationship between influenza activity and circulatory disease mortality reported in temperate countries is lacking.

South Africans warned of severe flu strains
21 April 2015 / Health24 (South Africa),
South Africans are being urged to get vaccinated after the Northern Hemisphere experienced one of its worst flu outbreaks that left nearly 30 children dead in the US

Studies Yield Mixed Findings on High-Dose Flu Vaccine for Seniors
28 April 2015 / Pharmacy Practice News,
A recent Veterans Affairs (VA) study found that the high-dose version (HD) of seasonal influenza vaccine for elderly people is only more effective than the standard dose (SD) in the “oldest old,” those 85 or older. Therefore, individuals between ages 65 and 84 would be protected if given just the SD vaccine.

Objective 2: increase in vaccine production capacity

Current and Emerging Cell Culture Manufacturing Technologies for Influenza Vaccines
February 2015 / Biomed Research International
Milian E et al.
This is a review of the most important cell culture manufacturing processes that have been developed in recent years for mass production of influenza vaccines.
Glaxo recalls flu vaccine due to potency problem
20 April 2015 / Health24 (South Africa), Pharmaceutical company GlaxoSmithKline has recalled 1.7 million doses of its four in one (QIV) flu vaccines because they lose potency and effectiveness over time.

Objective 3: research and development

Valneva : annonce l’approbation au Japon d’un vaccin prototype contre la grippe, produit sur la lignée cellulaire EB66®
8 April 2015 / Zonebourse.com
Valneva annonce l’approbation au Japon d’un vaccin prototype contre la grippe, produit sur la lignée cellulaire EB66® Vaccin développé par Chemo-Sero Therapeutic Research Institute (Kaketsuken) en partenariat avec GlaxoSmithKline 1, sur la lignée cellulaire EB66®, propriété de Valneva.

CDC researching human bird flu vaccine just in case
22 April 2015 / USA Today
While the risk to humans from the current avian flu crisis remains low, a senior Center for Disease Control official said Wednesday that the agency is preparing for the possibility of infection in humans just in case. The agency is closely studying the virus and researching a potential vaccine, which could be used for humans if needed. Alicia Fry, a CDC medical official, described the steps as routine public health measures.

Antibody to the influenza neuraminidase: an independent correlate of protection
8 April 2015 / J. Infectious Diseases
Arnold S. Monto et al.
While NAI antibody is not produced to a large extent in response to current IIIV, it appears to have an independent role in protection. As new influenza vaccines are developed, NA content should be considered.

Outbreak news

Influenza at the human-animal interface: WHO Summary and assessment
31 March 2015 / WHO
From 2003 through 31 March 2015, 826 laboratory-confirmed human cases of avian influenza A(H5N1) virus infection have been officially reported to WHO from 16 countries. Of these cases, 440 have died. Since the last WHO Influenza update on 3 March 2015, 42 new laboratory-confirmed human cases of avian influenza A(H5N1) virus infection, including 11 fatal cases, were reported to WHO from Egypt (37), China (three) and Indonesia (two).

New publication: avian influenza overview
14 April 2015 / WHO (Europe)
The WHO Regional Office for Europe has published an overview on avian influenza for public health professionals that provides the most comprehensive picture of avian influenza viruses currently known to infect humans and their spread across the world to date with data from countries from all 6 WHO Regions.
Emergence of a novel cluster of influenza A (H5N1) virus clade 2.2.1.2 with putative human health impact in Egypt, 2014/2015
2 April 2015 / Eurosurveillance
Arafa et al.
A distinct cluster of highly pathogenic avian influenza viruses of subtype A(H5N1) has been found to emerge within clade 2.2.1.2 in poultry in Egypt since summer 2014 and appears to have quickly become predominant. Viruses of this cluster may be associated with increased incidence of human influenza A(H5N1) infections in Egypt over the last months.

Bird flu: Millions of birds being culled in US, Africa and India as different strains infect poultry
23 April 2015 / International Business Times (India)
The latest outbreak of the bird virus flu in the US has been reported from a highly biosecure Iowa egg farm housing 3.8 million birds, all of which will be slaughtered to control the spread. Besides the H5N8, the new strain seen in the US - H5N2, is suspected to be a mutant descended from H5N8 plaguing poultry in Europe and Asia for years and possibly carried in by migrating ducks or geese.

Increased human protections offered as H5N2 outbreak spreads
27 April 2015 / Reuters
Hundreds of farm workers exposed to a highly pathogenic strain of bird flu have been offered antiviral medication as a preventative measure in recent days, U.S. public health officials said. To date, the virulent H5N2 influenza, which has infected turkeys and chickens on Midwestern poultry farms, has not affected humans. But because flu viruses are highly mutable, there is a worry that those in direct contact with infected birds could fall ill from the disease.

Egypt struggles to cope with bird flu
29 April 2015 / Al-Monitor (Middle East)
The high number of reported bird flu cases in Egypt does not bode well, as the government is apparently falling short in efforts to contain the crisis. Egypt has the highest number of cases of the most infectious strain of bird flu, H5N1, despite being in the midst of its third attempt in nine years to control the disease.

H5

H7

H9

H10