NEWS UPDATE  1 – 31 May 2015

Objective 1: increase in seasonal vaccine use

Concern over kids flu vaccine
08 May 2015 / Yahoo News
Health authorities are alarmed that some children under age five, including at least four in WA, have been given a flu vaccine banned for use in them because of an increased risk of seizures.

WHO global influenza update update
08 May 2015 / WHO
Globally, influenza activity has been low. In the northern hemisphere influenza activity was nearing interseasonal levels and in the southern hemisphere influenza activity remained low. Countries in the tropical zones reported low influenza activity with the exception of some countries in tropical Asia and west Africa.

H1N1 vaccination not must but should be considered: Experts
14 May 2015 / Indian Express
An expert group has strongly recommended vaccination against swine flu (H1N1 virus). Experts have identified three high-risk groups and stressed that the vaccine against H1N1 virus has played a role in reducing mortality among these vulnerable groups. They have said as many as 298 swine flu deaths this year have been due to “comorbidities”.

Vaccin H1N1: des indemnisations record proposées par l'Oniam
20 May 2015 / Notre temps.com
Trois adolescents atteints de narcolepsie après avoir reçu un vaccin contre la grippe A(H1N1) lors de la campagne de vaccination de 2009-2010, se sont vu proposer chacun des offres d'indemnisation allant de 600.000 à 650.000 euros, a-t-on appris auprès de leur avocat.

Europe update: the 2014-2015 influenza season has ended
26 May / ECDC
Antigenic drift in a proportion of A(H3N2) viruses was observed in the 2014–2015 influenza season, so the northern-hemisphere vaccine did not provide broad protection against A(H3N2) viruses. Despite some antigenic drift among B/Yamagata viruses, the A(H1N1)pdm09 and B/Yamagata components in the vaccine were likely to protect against circulating viruses.

Seasonal Influenza Vaccination for Children in Thailand: A Cost-Effectiveness Analysis
26 May 2015 / PLOS Medicine
Meeyai et al.
Vaccinating school-aged children with LAIV is likely to be cost-effective in Thailand in the short term, though the long-term consequences of such a policy cannot be reliably predicted given current knowledge of influenza epidemiology and immunology. Our work provides a coherent framework that can be used for similar analyses in other low- and middle-income countries.
Objective 2: increase in vaccine production capacity

**Flu vaccine recalled due to sub-potency**
04 May 2015 / MPR
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced that Sanofi Pasteur is voluntarily recalling three lots of its Fluzone Quadrivalent (quadrivalent inactivated "split virus" influenza vaccine [Types A and B]) due to potency issues.

**FDA licenses facility to increase production of FluBlok vaccine**
14 May 2015 / CIDRAP News
Protein Sciences Corp. of Meriden, Conn., announced this week that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has licensed a company facility in Pearl River, N.Y., that was acquired in late 2012 to increase production of the FluBlok influenza vaccine.

**U.S. bird flu causes egg shortage, emergency measures**
23 May 2015 / Reuters
As a virulent avian influenza outbreak continues to spread across the Midwestern United States, some egg-dependent companies are contemplating drastic steps - importing eggs from overseas or looking to egg alternatives.

**Takeda to distribute Kaketsuken's influenza vaccine**
26 May 2015 / Asian Scientist
Takeda has entered into an agreement with the Chemo-Sero-Therapeutic Research Institute, KAKETSUKEN, to distribute their seasonal influenza vaccine in Japan. Takeda will continue to distribute the seasonal influenza vaccine, Influenza HA Vaccine “SEIKEN,” manufactured by Denka Seiken.

Objective 3: research and development

**Universal flu vaccine closer to reality after Chinese-Australian scientific breakthrough**
15 May 2015 / The Telegraph (Shanghai, China)
Scientists have discovered how flu-killing immunity cells can memorise strains of influenza and destroy them, raising hopes for a new type of flu vaccine to give lifelong protection against the illness. By studying patients infected with a deadly bird flu virus in China in 2013, scientists from the University of Melbourne and Fudan University in Shanghai discovered how the body's "army of hitmen" T-cells memorize specific flu strains and destroy them. After collecting samples from H7N9-infected patients the scientists found that people who couldn't make the "flu assassin" CD8+T cells were dying.
Flu virus, measles comparison inspires vaccine design  
22 May 2015 / Health News
Researchers at Mount Sinai Hospital used similarities in the measles and flu viruses to discover a difference between them that may help in designing future vaccines. Vaccines for both measles and flu already exist, however the flu vaccine must be updated because of the virus’s ability to change and adapt in order to invade cells in the human body. The goal of researchers was to find genes in each virus that cannot survive changes.

Outbreak news

Vaccines developed for H5N1, H7N9 avian influenza strains  
21 May 2015 / Medical Express
A recent study with Kansas State University researchers details vaccine development for two new strains of avian influenza that can be transmitted from poultry to humans. The strains have led to the culling of millions of commercial chickens and turkeys as well as the death of hundreds of people.

Reuters: U.S. bird flu virus seen under control within four months: OIE  
26 May 2015 / Reuters
An epidemic of bird flu that has devastated U.S. poultry flocks this year is likely to be under control within four months as the United States steps up measures to contain the virus, the head of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) said.

H5

WHO Summary and assessment : Influenza at the human-animal interface  
01 May 2015 / WHO
From 2003 through 1 May 2015, 840 laboratory-confirmed human cases of avian influenza A(H5N1) virus infection have been officially reported to WHO from 16 countries. Of these cases, 447 have died. 1 Since the last WHO Influenza update on 31 March 2015, 14 new laboratory-confirmed human cases of avian influenza A(H5N1) virus infection, including one fatal case, were reported to WHO from Egypt (13) and China (one).

Bird flu epidemic hits 35 countries since early 2014 - OIE  
19 May 2015 / Reuters
More than 35 countries have been hit in a surge in bird flu outbreaks since early last year, killing tens of millions of poultry, the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) said on Tuesday. U.S. poultry and egg producers have been grappling with a record outbreak of avian flu, mainly the H5N2 strain, that has led to the culling of more than 33 million birds since December last year and is now threatening supplies.

H6

Seropositivity for avian influenza H6 virus among humans, China  
21 July 2015 / Emerging Infectious Diseases, Letter. Ahead of Print Xin L et al.
Although only one case of H6 virus infection in a human has been reported worldwide), several biological characteristics of H6 viruses indicate that they are highly infectious to mammals. Human infection with influenza H6 virus in Mainland China has not been reported, but 63 serum specimens tested in our study were positive for the H6 virus
Epi comparison: H7N9 a greater pandemic threat than H5N1

4 May 2015 / CIDRAP

The potential pandemic risk may be greater for H7N9 avian flu than its H5N1 counterpart, according to a side-by-side analysis of the epidemiology of sporadic cases and clusters caused by the diseases, an international research team led by the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention reported today.

H9N2 infects Egyptian boy

26 May 2015 / CIDRAP

Egypt has reported an H9N2 avian influenza case involving a 7-year-old boy, the country’s third such detection so far this year, according to a posting from ProMED Mail that is based on a notification from a United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) database. The boy got sick on Apr 29, experiencing a high fever and a cough. His respiratory sample tested positive for H9N1 on May 7.