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Press Release

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State releases study of H1N1 hospitalizations

Study focuses on Anchorage hospitalizations

(Anchorage, AK) — The Department of Health and Social Services, Section of Epidemiology, has released a report summarizing H1N1 related hospitalizations in Anchorage.

According to the report, characteristics of patients hospitalized with influenza in Anchorage area hospitals were similar to those of patients reported in previous North American reviews. Hospitalization rates were high in people under age 25, most cases occurred in people with pre-existing health conditions, and a higher proportion of adult patients were obese when compared to the general population.

In this evaluation, the race-specific hospitalization rates were highest for people of the American Indian/Alaska Native and Asian/Pacific Islander races, particularly those under 25 years of age. Most hospitalizations in these racial groups occurred in people who were also in one of the 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccine priority groups and in people for whom antiviral treatment (i.e. Tamiflu) is currently recommended. Therefore, these data do not support a need to modify the CDC's existing 2009 H1N1 vaccine priority groups or treatment recommendations for Alaska.

“These findings represent preliminary results of an ongoing investigation and are subject to numerous limitations, particularly those associated with calculating reliable rates using small sample sizes,” said state epidemiologist Dr. Joe McLaughlin, who edited the report. “Our recommendation remains that vaccination is still the best bet for reducing serious illnesses associated with influenza infection.”

The priority groups for H1N1 vaccine are:

- Pregnant women,
- Anyone who lives with or cares for a child under 6 months old,
- Anyone from 6 months to 24 years old,
- Anyone from 25 to 64 years old with pre-existing health conditions, and
- Health care and emergency service workers.

A complete copy of the EPI Bulletin is available at:

http://www.epi.alaska.gov/bulletins/docs/b2009_30.pdf.

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