

## Section 6

### Public relations on novel influenza

#### 1 Aggressive expansion of public relations

Since the outbreak of novel influenza in USA and Mexico, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare has actively promoted disclosure of information on situation of infected persons and epidemic.

At the same time, the Ministry has actively conducted public relations in order that every citizen may appropriately respond to novel influenza

by ① steadily sending basic message for all the citizens about infection prevention (hand washing, gargling, good manners to cough and self-imposed restriction of going out when infected etc.)

② calling persons with basic diseases for attention (early hospital visits and early therapy when influenza-like symptom occurred)

and ③ constructing appropriate system for information provision to consultation for all citizens.

Especially those questions frequently asked by all citizens are each summarized as follows and were opened to the public at any time on the web-site of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare:

- “Q&A about novel influenza” : in response to wide range of questions
- “Q&A about novel influenza” : basic information on vaccine (questions about matters changeable at any time such as number of vaccination rounds are separately summarized as “Frequently Asked Questions” )
- “Q&A about “the Basic Guideline for Measures” by Headquarters for measures against the new type influenza” : engagement by the Government including the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare
- “Please beware! Q&A about Tamiflu” about personal imports of Tamiflu
- “Q&A about novel influenza (A/H1N1) made by entrepreneurs and the personnel” : countermeasures etc. for novel influenza by entrepreneurs and the personnel.

Furthermore, especially regarding persons with pre-existing diseases, information provision has been strengthened through each group of patients etc.

On the other hand, in addition to all general citizens, we have endeavored to provide information responding to respective basic knowledge and interests of such medical care experts as doctors and nurses, or staff members of municipalities managing in

individual regions.

And as for media of public relations, besides government public relations, home page of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare and the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare video channels were actively used for information provision with some English versions. Additionally, message of the Prime Minister was televised on 11 May about the new type influenza.

## 2 The importance of information provision to every citizen

### (1) what the appropriate information provision should be

In information provision to every citizen, the characteristics of mass media and the perception of persons obtaining information via media should also be considered. Timing of announcement, characteristics of medium, size of space or time also count, therefore, even if the news report itself is accurate information, it may not lead to accurate understanding without grasp of whole context including the progress so far and background situation. Accordingly, in addition to just occasional and fragmental announcement of only new information, we also, at each turning point, endeavored to convey the overview through the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare video channels etc. Hereafter also we have to seriously face the opinion and criticism of the citizens and incessantly continue improvement in order not only to just release information, but also to lead to accurate understanding based on accurate information.

Also in order to ensure public trust in us, prior to crisis we have to conduct continuous risk communication concerning various health-related risks such as infectious diseases including the new type influenza.

Furthermore, at the moment of crisis, reliable information might become extremely limited for a satisfactory information provision. We still have to continuously consider a proper information provision which would ensure public trust even in such situation, enabling people to feel secure and leading to an appropriate action.

### (2) Endeavor to bridge information gap

It is conceivable that on-site response to the new type influenza may partially vary by infection extension in individual regions and situation of health resources. Even if the response is satisfactorily conducted by your municipalities and medical institutions at the moment, this might be mistaken for unsatisfactory compared with other regions when comprehensive announcement from nationwide view is made by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. And in the daily contact between on-site doctors and

patients or their families, such case occurred where patients etc. are already familiar with new information through TV or internet while on-site doctors did not obtain from related organs the same information or information concerning specific response respective to individual site which is based on principle of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, and could not appropriately answer the questions of patients. Similar problems also actually happened between municipalities and the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare.

Information must promptly and accurately transferred, at the same time, the confusion on site of practical medical care must be minimized. The provision of What's New by RSS feed on the home page is aimed at inducing active access to information - a trial for bridging information gap, however, needs further improvement.

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\*1 A system for prompt access to data updating situation and contents of web-sites, being used also for news feed via internet of newspaper companies etc. "R S S is an abbreviation for R D F (Resource Description Framework) Site Summary.

~Column~

“Importance of the Cough Etiquette” and “How to wash your hands”

Because of the outbreak of the novel influenza, people have realized that the basic prevention such as “the Cough Etiquette” and “washing your hands properly” is also effective to prevent seasonal influenza and epidemics of other disease.

The major route of infection is categorized into two types, ① one of which is droplet infection (infected by inhaling droplets as infected person sneezed and coughed. If you are close enough to be exposed directly to sneezes and coughs (about within two meters), the risk of infection rather high) and ② another is contagion (taking infected saliva or snivel in your body from your mouth or nose through hand-to-hand contact, doorknob or straps).

It is essential to follow the Cough Etiquette, such as wearing a mask if you cannot stop coughing, not coughing at people, keeping your face away from people around you when coughing suddenly and cover your mouth and nose with tissues if you have, to prevent ① droplet infection.

Besides, if you take care of your family with flu in your home, you must wear a mask as a

rule when you face to them and even if those who are taken care of, by wearing a mask it helps you prevent from infection on some level. Although that healthy person wears a mask is thought as one of infection precaution if you are in a crowded place, especially in place with bad ventilation such as indoor or inside a car, wearing a mask outside is not thought as much effective as far as those places are too crowded.

As for ② contact infection, you must understand first that “you cannot be infected with the novel influenza by just getting virus on your hands”. Since you cannot be infected unless by touching mucous membranes of mouth, that of nose and that of eyes with your hands after you got virus on your hands, you can reduce the risk by washing your hands frequently. It is very important to often wash your hands after covering your cough and sneezes with your hand, for example, before cooking in addition to when you went back home.

It is essential to wash your hands carefully at least for 15 seconds including between your fingers and your wrist by using soap. Please keep it in your mind to dry your hands throughout with clean towel after wash. Needless to say this but it must be effective to wash your hands after taking care of your family in case that you nurse them in your home.

Although there are various information on novel influenza on MHLW Channel (see 81p), we put information on “Importance of wearing a mask” and “How to wash your hands” on that channel since October 2009, and we are publicizing those information to get your understanding and cooperation. We appreciate if you read it once again.