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Experts Report Access to Patients' Electronic Health Records will Play an Important Role this Flu Season

BALTIMORE, MD - The Centers for Disease Control has confirmed that people under the age of 25 as well as pregnant women and people with specific health conditions will be affected by the H1N1 virus at a rate higher than is typically seen with the seasonal flu. ¹

David Perlin, PhD, director of The Public Health Research Institute at the International Center for Public Health at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, says it is beneficial to have your child's health history electronically stored in preparation for the upcoming H1N1 outbreak. "The availability and easy accessibility to your child's health history could save his or her life as the virus continues to spread among schools and colleges around the country," said Perlin. "If your child has H1N1 flu symptoms, with one visit to PinnacleCare's Electronic Health Records portal, a healthcare professional can quickly glance over your child's records and provide personalized, tailored services, advice, and treatment. Of the most severe cases resulting in death in children under the age of 18 years, two-thirds had one or more high-risk medical conditions, most commonly neurodevelopmental disorders."

For example, if a student calls the infirmary to describe his or her symptoms and his or her records reveal a history of diabetes, that student could be asked to come in and get evaluated immediately. Whereas, another student with a low-grade fever with no conditions that put him or her into the high risk category might be asked to come in tomorrow.

Recently, some schools have reported plans to use electronic health records to manage future H1N1 cases. But, do you honestly have time to prepare your child's complete health history which would include locating *all* doctors and healthcare practitioners that have seen and treated your child (blood tests, MRIs, x-rays, surgeries, etc), completing administrative work such as signing and faxing back release forms, and scanning records into online solutions like Google Health or Microsoft's Health Vault?

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A White House expert panel report suggested 30 to 50 percent of the population could contract the H1N1 virus during the course of the pandemic. In addition, 30,000 to 90,000 could die. “These statistics lead us to believe doctors’ offices and emergency rooms will be extremely crowded in the coming months. Having easy access to a child’s health history has the potential to help control doctor office and emergency room traffic as the H1N1 continues to spread,” explained to PinnacleCare Chief Medical Officer Dr. Miles Varn.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, about 70 percent of people hospitalized in 2009 with the H1N1 virus had one or more of the following conditions: diabetes, pregnancy, heart disease, asthma or kidney disease. These were also previously recognized as putting people at “high risk” for seasonal flu complications.¹

“H1N1 flu illness has ranged from mild to severe. While most people have recovered without medical treatment, there have been hospitalizations and deaths caused by the disease,” said Varn. “Most of those who died had other health conditions.”

The main difference between seasonal flu and swine flu is that people over 64 years of age, the group normally very susceptible to seasonal flu, do not seem to be at an increased risk for contracting the H1N1 virus.¹ “Children are heading back to school and young adults are starting college. Young people tend to form groups throughout the day — in classrooms and dormitories, or for social purposes throughout the day and night — making this demographic very susceptible to transmission of the virus. We are already seeing large clusters of disease, as students have returned to college,” said Perlin.

Drs. Varn and Perlin recommend speaking with your children about the H1N1 virus and having a discussion about the different ways they can stay healthy at school. They offer the following tips to help you and your family stay healthy and H1N1 free this flu season:

- Know your health history and be sure it is easily accessible.
- Cough or sneeze into your hand or arm.
- Throughout the day avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water.
- Limit your contact with others who are sick.
- Stay home from work, school, or other public places if you become ill. You should remain home until you have gone 24hrs without fever.
- Practice immune-boosting health habits including good nutrition, regular exercise, drinking plenty of fluid, and getting adequate sleep.

“Executives that travel a great deal recognize business can not stop in light of the H1N1 virus. And, some students are leaving for semesters abroad. I would highly recommend these professionals and students have their health records collected and maintained electronically,” said Perlin. “With a pandemic, there is always the possibility of not being allowed to leave the country you are visiting due to a large virus outbreak. With universal access and one simple click, doctors anywhere in the world can review your health history, diagnoses, prescriptions, and more through PinnacleCare’s Electronic Health Records resource.”

All [PinnacleCare Electronic Health Records](#) are physician reviewed, updated regularly, and managed and maintained by PinnacleCare.

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PinnacleCare is the world's leading private health advisory company, connecting individuals to the world's most advanced healthcare, advising them on all medical issues and managing their interactions with the healthcare system. Each member family is assigned personal PinnacleCare advisors available 24/7 who coordinate the family's healthcare, consolidate all records into PinnacleCare's Electronic Health Records solution for instant availability, conduct best practices research and collaborate with top medical specialists worldwide. PinnacleCare is the only company to offer comprehensive health advisory -- from disease prevention and wellness management to superior medical response and treatment in times of emergency, injury or illness. PinnacleCare serves 3,000 members worldwide and has offices throughout the United States and London. For more information, visit www.PinnacleCare.com.

Dr. David Perlin is the Director of the Public Health Research Institute (PHRI), a 68 year-old biomedical research organization specializing in infectious diseases that was recently established as a Center of Excellence at the UMDNJ-New Jersey Medical School. Dr. Perlin helped establish PHRI as one of the leading tuberculosis and opportunistic infections research organizations in the world, and he was instrumental in the creation of the International Center for Public Health on the UMDNJ campus in Newark, NJ. Dr. Perlin earned a B.A. degree in Biology from Brandeis University and a Ph.D. from Cornell University. Dr. Perlin joined PHRI in 1985 and was named Scientific Director in 1992, President in 2005, and Director of the new Center in 2006. He was appointed Professor of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics at New Jersey Medical School-UMDNJ in 2003, and was named a Fellow of the New York Academy of Sciences in 2005.

Drs. Perlin and Varn are available for interviews. Please contact [Stephanie Block](#) to coordinate.

¹ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Questions & Answers 2009 H1N1 Flu (Swine Flu) and You. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/qa.htm>. Accessed September 8, 2009.