

## **FLU SEASON AND VACCINATION**

Dear Colleagues Health Professionals

Fortunately, there is almost no vaccine shortage anymore in the US so the people at risk should get vaccinated if they have not been already

For Your Information, please read the following news from the Center for Diseases Control in Atlanta

**FLU CASES RISE IN US, PEAK MAY BE AHEAD: CDC**

By Paul Simao

ATLANTA (Reuters) Mar 03 - The number of cases of influenza has jumped since January, suggesting the worst of the 2004-2005 flu season may be ahead, federal health officials said on Thursday.

The U.S. flu season, which typically runs from October through March, began slowly despite fears a vaccine shortage would leave millions of unvaccinated Americans vulnerable.

It picked up speed recently, with 33 states reporting widespread flu activity for the week ending February 19, 2005, according to data released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

A total of 8.5% of deaths reported by 122 cities across the nation were attributed to pneumonia and influenza for that week, the highest level in the current flu season and above the weekly epidemic threshold, the CDC said.

Nine children have died from flu in the past two months.

"This may be as bad as it gets, but it could continue to go up," said Lynnette Brammer, an epidemiologist in the CDC's influenza branch.

Influenza is believed to kill about 36,000 people and hospitalize 114,000 in the United States every year. Exact figures on flu-related deaths are difficult to get because U.S. doctors are not required to report such deaths.

The rise in flu cases came amid efforts by the federal government to ensure the most needy were vaccinated.

Although health experts say it is better to get vaccinated early in the flu season, Brammer noted people could still get protection from a shot at this time of the year.

Reuters Health Information 2005. © 2005 Reuters Ltd.

Greetings

Huynh Do Phi, M.D.

March 4, 2005