

September 7, 2006

**MESSAGE FROM THE ACTING UNDER SECRETARY FOR HEALTH
VA Influenza Advisory #1
2006-2007**

Pandemic Influenza

- 1. VA's Oseltamivir Stockpile and Central Procurement Advice**
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- 3. Use of VA Pharmaceutical Caches in Pandemic Influenza**
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1) VA's Oseltamivir Stockpile and Central Procurement Advice

- Oseltamivir is an antiviral drug indicated for the treatment or prevention of influenza types A and B. It may be effective in treating or preventing the H5N1 strain of influenza (Avian Flu). The H5N1 strain is currently causing disease in birds and other animal populations, including humans, living in Southeast Asia.
- The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and other Federal Departments such as the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and international organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), have already purchased, and plan to continue to purchase, supplies of oseltamivir to stockpile in the event of a pandemic.
- The VHA Emergency Pharmacy Service (EPS) holds VA's national oseltamivir stockpile and will continue procurement to support VA needs.
- Guidelines for additional local medical center purchase and the use of the oseltamivir stockpile were distributed in Under Secretary for Health Information Letter IL-10-2005-16, "VHA Oseltamivir Stockpile." This Information Letter advised that local purchases of oseltamivir are allowable and can be used to supplement VA's national oseltamivir stockpile.
- Before procuring additional oseltamivir, medical centers should consider the availability of this national stockpile, which will be distributed among Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs), as well as stored centrally. The reasons are: (1) VHA's ability to include VA's oseltamivir stockpile requirements in the Food and Drug Administration (FDA)/DoD Shelf Life Extension Program will substantially extend the shelf life of the drug, and (2) funds that facilities might spend on oseltamivir could be used for other pandemic planning initiatives.

2) Distribution of Oseltamivir

- VHA's Pharmacy Benefits Management Strategic Healthcare Group (PBM SHG), in conjunction with the VHA Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards (OPHEH), is developing a national distribution plan for the existing VA oseltamivir stockpile. This distribution plan will be based on veteran population dispersion, number of unique users of prescriptions, oseltamivir availability, distribution capabilities, and geographic considerations. The VHA plan calls for oseltamivir to be initially distributed to approximately 50 regional VA locations. This will ensure timely access to the oseltamivir if needed. VHA anticipates the initial distribution of oseltamivir will commence in September 2006.

3) Use of the VA Pharmaceutical Caches in Pandemic Influenza

- There is a considerable overlap of medication and supplies contained in VA's Pharmaceutical Caches and those recommended for local procurement are cited in Appendix D-4 of the VA Pandemic Influenza Plan.

- Medications and supplies contained in VA's Pharmaceutical Caches should be considered available for use during a pandemic influenza. Therefore, VISN and medical center leadership should consider the availability of the pharmaceutical cache inventory before procuring additional medications and supplies.

4) Use of Pharmaceutical Cache Storage Space for Additional Products

- Storage conditions for the Pharmaceutical Caches are currently outlined in VHA Directive 2002-026. The Emergency Pharmacy Service will evaluate waivers to use the emergency cache storage space for storage of additional products. Waiver requests should be submitted through the Medical Center Director to Robert Grasso, Director, Emergency Pharmacy Service.
- A description of each product (pharmaceutical or supplies), along with the quantity to be stored, should be listed in the waiver request.
- If approved, the additional products will be:
 - 1) Stored in the same space but separate from the VA Pharmaceutical Cache;
 - 2) Organized so as to not impede access to or movement of the VA cache; and
 - 3) Secured in accordance with VHA Directive 2002-026.

Michael J. Kussman, MD, MS, MACP

Inquiries may be directed to:

- a. Chief Officer, Public Health and Environmental Hazards (OPHEH);
Lawrence.Deyton@va.gov; 202-273-8575.
- b. Deputy Chief Officer, Public Health and Environmental Hazards (OPHEH);
Victoria.Davey@va.gov; 202-273-8575 or 8590.
- c. Chief Consultant, Pharmacy Benefits Management Strategic Healthcare Group;
Michael.Valentino@va.gov; 202-273-8429.
- d. Deputy Chief Consultant, Pharmacy Benefits Management Strategic Healthcare Group;
Virginia.Torrise@va.gov; 202-273-8427.
- e. Director, Emergency Pharmacy Service, Associate Chief Consultant, Pharmacy Benefits Management Strategic Healthcare Group; Robert.Grasso@va.gov; 708-786-7872.