



UNH Experts Bring Insight To H1N1 Outbreak

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DURHAM, N.H. – University of New Hampshire faculty members are available to comment on the H1N1 virus, or swine flu.

Marc Hiller, associate professor of health management and policy: 603-862-3411, marc.hiller@unh.edu (not available Nov. 6 – 11)

Hiller's expertise is in ethical issues in health care and public health such as preserving individual rights to the point at which individual behavior places the health of the public at risk.

"Issues of social distancing, basic principles such as frequent hand washing and use of disposable tissues, scientifically-based public health strategies and efforts are all important but must not come at the cost of precipitating unjustified fear or mandatory restriction of individual rights," says Hiller. "As the evidence of health risks associated with H1N1, particularly with respect to persons at higher levels of risk become more known, added precautions and restrictions of H1N1-infected persons become more justifiable in an effort to prevent the spread of the disease." He adds that the outbreak provides more evidence of the need and importance of assuring adequate support to the nation's public health infrastructure that often suffers in the absence of the public's awareness of what constitutes public health.

John Seavey, Sackett Professor of health management and policy, john.seavey@unh.edu; 603-862-3414

Seavey can discuss the flu in general and the availability of vaccines. He serves on the N.H. Public Health Association Board and is co-chair of the policy committee. He recently was appointed by the state director of public health to serve on an ethics committee dealing with potential pandemics in the state. His major research focus is rural health care delivery.

Paul Harvey, assistant professor of management at the UNH Whittemore School of Business and Economics: 603-862-3301, paul.harvey@unh.edu.

Paul Harvey is an assistant professor of management at the UNH Whittemore School of Business and Economics who researches workplace issues such as job stress, worker productivity, employee behavior, and factors that impact employee turnover. He can discuss workplace performance issues related to the spread of H1N1, including the heightened suspicion of people taking advantage of the swine flu "hype" and using a case of the sniffles as an excuse to miss work/class "just in case."

"A lot of organizations have instituted policies requiring supervisors to make sure that potentially sick employees stay away from work as well. The problem is that the employees might be suspicious of people that use the flu as an excuse to get out of work," Harvey says.

"This may be especially true for employees who have a track record of being lazy. It's a 'boy who cried wolf' situation where a person could truly be very sick, but coworkers assume it's yet another attempt at gaming the system."

Kristin Smith, family demographer at the Carsey Institute and research assistant professor of sociology: kristin.smith@unh.edu, 603-862-2821

Kristin Smith has examined access to paid sick leave in New Hampshire and is available to discuss the implications of losing time at work due to the H1N1 virus.

"For the 26 percent of New Hampshire workers who do not have access to paid sick or vacation leave, the public health recommendation to stay home from work while contagious with H1N1 presents at best a financial hardship and at worst an impossibility. Parents with sick children face similar stresses," she says.

Todd DeMitchell, chair of the department of education and professor of education and justice studies: 603-862-5043, tad@cisunix.unh.edu

DeMitchell is a professor of education and justice studies and chair of the UNH Department of Education. He researches the impact of court cases and other legal mechanisms on schools, school liability, and adequate supervision of students. He can discuss the twin challenges of legal duty and professional obligation facing educators as the H1N1 virus spreads.

"First, schools owe a duty to their students to take reasonable actions in response to foreseeable events that increase the danger to students' health and safety. The spread of the H1N1 virus is not just a foreseeable event it is an actual event. Thus schools must take reasonable actions such as increased sanitizing of shared work areas and providing instructions on safety precautions that students can take to reduce their exposure to H1N1," DeMitchell says. "Second, schools need to plan for the potential interruption of learning." DeMitchell notes that closing a school presents challenges to meeting state-mandated school days as well as the needs of individual students.

Richard French, D.V.M., director of the N.H. Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory: 603-862-2726, richard.french@unh.edu

French is director of the New Hampshire Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory located at the University of New Hampshire, where he is also a clinical professor. A veterinary pathologist, he is an expert on zoonotic diseases, diseases that can be transmitted from other animals to humans, particularly those with public health significance like H1N1 and avian flu.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 12,200 undergraduate and 2,200 graduate students.