

Influenza Surveillance Net work

It has been decided by the National Technical Committee for Avian Influenza Pandemic Preparedness to improve surveillance on influenza in humans. This is complementary to the influenza surveillance already initiated among animals by the Department of Animal Production and Health (DAPH). Once established, human and animal influenza surveillance activities would act as the early warning system for a possible Avian Influenza outbreak in the country.

Human Influenza surveillance would be initiated in the 20 hospitals identified as sentinel surveillance sites for Avian Influenza. These institutions are expected to send specimens from patients suspecting of Influenza like illness (ILI) or any other respiratory viral infection from OPD and wards to the Medical Research Institute (MRI) or the Molecular Medicine Unit, Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya, Ragama. This would enable the reference laboratories to identify the current influenza virus strains in the country so that it could be used as an early warning system.

At least thirty (30) samples should be collected from each sentinel site for a month and sent to MRI or the Molecular Medicine Unit of Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya, Ragama. These have been identified as the diagnostic Laboratories in Sri Lanka for human influenza surveillance. Laboratories of Teaching Hospital Karapitiya and Teaching Hospital Kandy have been identified as screening laboratories. This number of samples is important so that the size of the samples processed is adequate to achieve the desired objective.

Patients with at least 6 of the following criteria should be included in the surveillance in a non-epidemic period. Those with at least 4 criteria should be included during an influenza epidemic.

Criteria for selection of patients for ILI (Influenza like Illness)

1. Acute onset (at least within 4 days)
2. Cough
3. Fever
4. Rigors or chills
5. Myalgia
6. Prostration / weakness
7. Redness of throat
8. Similar illness in close contacts

Type of specimens to collect from the selected patients

Naso-Pharyngeal Aspirate (to be collected using a mucous extractor)

Nasal wash

Nasal and throat swabs (1 throat and 2 nasal swabs per patient)

Post mortem specimen from lung tissue (Tru cut needle biopsy)

Transport of Specimens

Specimen should be packed in ice and transported to the MRI or the Molecular Medicine Unit, Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya, Ragama in viral transport medium (available on request from MRI and the Molecular Medicine Unit, Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya, Ragama).

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