



Sept. 11, 2009

Dear UNCSA Community,

I am writing to inform you that we have what appears to be our first two cases of H1N1 flu. The students, both in high school, are staying off-campus to recuperate. I say "appears" because the cases are not confirmed by laboratory testing. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has advised that health centers no longer test patients to confirm H1N1 -- if a person has an influenza-like-illnesses (ILI), in all likelihood it is H1N1. So that's what we're calling it, and we are treating it as such.

As you can imagine, we are hardly alone in this situation. On Wednesday, during a videoconference on H1N1 that involved the entire UNC system, it was announced that there have been approximately 1,500 to 1,600 cases in UNC schools. Some are new, some are current, and many have run their course. Given the widespread nature of the H1N1 flu, more cases on our campus and on other campuses are virtually assured. During the videoconference, experts reported that the virus is ubiquitous, and that you can be exposed as easily in your supermarket, church or gym as you can be in your class or your office. In addition, this virus affects those under the age of 24 most frequently.

You may have seen some students wearing protective masks around campus. These students have not presented H1N1 flu-like symptoms. However, because they have had close exposure to the illness, we asked them to wear masks for a two-day period as a precautionary measure. Health Services is asking that those diagnosed with the flu notify close contacts, those with whom they were in close contact during the previous 24-48 hours.

Please rest assured that we have a well-thought-out and well-practiced campus response to H1N1. We are following guidelines of our local health department and those of the CDC. We have a Pandemic Influenza Plan -- which includes H1N1 specific information -- in place, and it is posted on the H1N1 information page on our website, www.uncsa.edu/h1n1.

We are monitoring the progression of H1N1 influenza in our county and on our campus and will inform students, faculty, and staff as conditions change. Presently, we are asking all students to call Health Services if they are feeling ill and have flu-like symptoms. We are asking students not to attend classes once they begin having flu-like symptoms, in order to minimize contact with other persons (possibly infecting them).

We are also asking students who present with an influenza-like-illness to go home or off-campus for a period of 5 days to recover from the flu. Any student unable go home or find off-campus housing should notify the Student Health Center, as there is some limited isolation housing available.

Students will not be penalized for missing class, rehearsals, etc., because of the flu. Student Health Services will record the names of any students who have presented with influenza-like-illness and will forward that information to the Chief Academic Officer, who will forward that list to the arts schools and academic programs as excused absences. If you are an off-campus student, you may call Health Services (336-770-3288) or the Department of Public Safety (770-3321 available 24 hours) to let us know that you need to be excused from all classes for 5 days. Public Safety will provide any names to Health Services for inclusion on the Chief Academic Officer list.

Likewise, faculty and staff who are presenting with an influenza-like-illness should stay away from work and campus until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications. Faculty and staff will not be penalized for missing work with the flu. Employees may use accrued leave such as sick time, comp time, vacation, or bonus vacation for their time away from the office or classroom. For more information, employees are advised to review the communicable disease policy on the Office of State Personnel website:

<http://www.osp.state.nc.us/manuals/manual99/Communicable%20Disease%20Emergency.pdf>.

We are fortunate that the H1N1 virus is less virulent than first thought. The vast majority of cases are mild, lasting 3-5 days. H1N1 appears no more severe than most seasonal flu. Therefore, we do not anticipate that we will have to implement steps such as social distancing, canceling classes or productions, or closing the university. However, we will utilize our county Public Health Department, as well as CDC guidelines, to make that decision.

As a first step toward flu prevention, Health Services is encouraging all students, faculty and staff to receive both their annual seasonal flu shot and the newer H1N1 vaccine. The seasonal flu shot is currently available in Health Services for students. Human Resources has arranged a seasonal flu vaccination clinic for faculty and staff on Oct 23. The H1N1 vaccine should be available in 5-6 weeks. The campus community will be notified as soon as that vaccine is available.

As I said earlier, everyone should assume that the H1N1 virus is in your environment and you should take precautions. That's why we have been stressing easy, but effective, prevention. It's as simple as:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, and throw the tissue in the trash after you use it. If a tissue is not available, use your sleeve -- not your hand -- to cover your mouth.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers can be used if soap and water are not available. A hand sanitizer like Purell will eliminate 99.99 percent of flu germs.
- Hand sanitizer is provided in the Student Commons' dining areas and Computer Lab -- use it!
- Regular cleansers such as Lysol and Clorox wipes will also kill flu germs on surfaces -- no exotic concoctions are necessary!

Finally, all faculty and staff are invited to an H1N1 flu information session at noon on Sept. 17 in the Thrust in Performance Place. We will present more of these, for students and/or others, for example, should there be demand.

For more information, I urge you to visit the many informative websites dedicated to H1N1:

North Carolina flu preparedness: www.flu.nc.gov

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services flu site: www.flu.gov

U.S. Centers for Disease Control: www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu

I hope this letter is helpful in detailing the measures that UNCSA is taking to protect our campus community from the spread of H1N1, and to care for our students who become ill. I am confident that together, we will keep each other as flu-free as possible this year, and that the show will go on.



John Mauceri
Chancellor