

**JULY 24, 2018****HEALTH ADVISORY****Consider Variant Influenza when Assessing Patients with Acute Respiratory Illness  
During the Summer Months**

The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) would like to remind clinicians to consider influenza viruses, including variant influenza, as a possible diagnosis when evaluating patients with acute respiratory illness. Influenza viruses are called variant when a virus normally found in pigs is found in a human. Recent examples of variant viruses include A H3N2v, A H1N1v, and A H1N2v. Fast detection and characterization of these novel influenza viruses remain important components of national efforts to ensure these viruses are not being transmitted in an efficient and ongoing way in humans, and to limit further exposure of humans to infected animals. Last summer, two cases of H3N2v were associated with swine exposure at a fair in North Dakota. The NDDoH offers the following recommendations for North Dakota providers.

If patients are presenting at your clinic or hospital with signs or symptoms of influenza:

- A good clinical and risk history should be collected. Ask patients about any exposures to swine, including visiting agricultural venues at fairs or other events.
- Collect samples on patients with swine exposure to submit to the NDDoH Division Microbiology. Samples should be: nasopharyngeal swab, OR nasal aspirate or wash, OR two swabs combined into one viral transport media (such as a nasal swab combined with a throat swab)
- Contact the Division of Disease Control immediately at 800.472.2180 (701.220.0819 after hours) to report possible novel flu and arrange specimen transport.
- Consider antiviral treatment with oral oseltamivir or inhaled zanamivir in patients with suspected or confirmed H3N2v virus infection for patients who are hospitalized or are at high risk for complications due to infection with influenza.

It is important to note that variant influenza may test negative, or may test positive for seasonal influenza using commercial or molecular testing methodologies. For this reason, results from these tests cannot be solely relied upon, and a specimen should be sent to the Division of Microbiology.

For more information, please contact Disease Control at 800.472.2180 (701.220.0819 after hours).