

Monday, November 9, 2009

Panic? Don't panic?

In the last few days i thought a little bit about this swine flu panic. Let's put aside that the vaccination is an adjuvanated vaccination and that it contains questionable chemicals.

Of course i'm reading all the stuff about the swine flu as almost everybody, as i'm trying to decide if i get the additional flu shot. Due to visiting many customers a year, i decided to get the seasonal flu shot some years ago and it's a yearly practice to me.

But i'm not convinced, that this flu shot is necessary. I just thought, it's even contra productive on a global scale. The following article is just a public braindump of thoughts....

At the moment you can read news like "Every flu patient is a swine flu patient" and the tabloids start to report about children that were dying because of swine flu. And obviously with the more frequent reporting the run for vaccinations has started. The tabloids report about every new dead patient like "Yet Another Swine Flu Death".

But perhaps the public is interpreting this news absolutely wrong. "Every flu patient is a swine flu patient" may be a good sign instead of being a reason for panic.

There are several flu strains out there: One of them is H3N2, your seasonal flu shot immunize you against the virus-du-jour of this strain. This beast kills people in Germany. 16.000 deaths ... per flu season ... in Germany alone ... and there isn't a single newspaper reporting about this. But the vaccination against the swine flu H1N1 doesn't help you against H3N2.

On the other side: At the moment it looks like that H1N1 is less lethal than H3N2. Of course there are lethal outcomes of H1N1, but on the other side there even people not recognizing that they have H1N1 at all. We aren't immunizing the people against H3N2 in the same step, thus we fight H1N1 and there isn't a similar campaign against other strains, that are even more dangerous.

This led me to a thought: On a global scale it could be more efficient to distribute H1N1 as far as possible. Many people in the less-developed world (from the western perspective) can't afford vaccinations for H3N2. When a less lethal H1N1 forces the people into their beds, the H3N2 can't take its death toll. When this moniker "Every flu patient is a H1N1 flu patient" is true, it looks like that H1N1 effectively suppresses other strains of the flu. There are some hints in the literature, that this is exactly the current scenario: H1N1 take the spot in the ecosystem that was used by H3N2 before. The stronger virus prevails, the stronger virus is H1N1 and it looks like as we can live better with H1N1 than with H3N2.

On the other side: There were some comments, that H1N1 is less stable, thus it has a bigger potential to mutate to a super bug. But so far, H1N1 was stable and the next question would be the point, if the current vaccination helps against a mutated H1N1 strain.

However: When we now vaccinate against H1N1, but not against H3N2 we give H3N2 an advantage. So we favor the more dangerous strain. Doesn't sound reasonable.

Furthermore i think, this topic is emotionally overloaded. I know it's hard to lose a loved one. And it's annoying to go through a flu. So we tend to fight the flu with all available weapons. We think of flu viruses as "They want to kill us where we stand" and that they develop into a form that is more effective in killing us. But i think, the contrary is true.

You have to keep in mind that the flu virus has an objective: It's not "kill everybody", it's "spread as far as it can". You don't spread by killing your host. The best flu virus would be a flu virus that doesn't harm its host at all and given that the evolution tends to develop more effective life forms, i'm sure we will see such a coexisting form of the flu virus in the future.

When you think a little bit about it, you could come to the conclusion, that the Herpes virus is an excellent viral design (it doesn't kill many hosts, it spread easily, thus a large amount of people carry it), the HI virus is a mediocre design (it kills its host, thus it has constraints in its distributions as people try to protect themselves, but the hosts live long enough to spread the virus a little bit) and Ebola is a horrible design (It kills its host, before the host is able to spread the virus).

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By the way: Just think of Escherichia coli. We live in a symbiosis with the harmless forms of E. coli. They duplicate in such a speed in our lower intestine that they suppress more dangerous bacteria just by outnumbering them.

At the end H1N1 may be an effective cure against more lethal forms of the flu. Obviously on a global scale. And we do the best at the moment to interfere with Mother Nature to help us.

But: I'm not a medical doctor ... perhaps i'm missing something important. I'm still having no idea, if it's a good idea to get the additional flu shot or not ...

Posted by Joerg Moellenkamp in Braindump, English at 14:33

My Friend,

I've had H1N1 - it was a terrible experience. What makes H1N1 different from other influenza virii is the way it attacks your lungs. I live in Ottawa, Canada and the virus is currently ripping it's way through our community. Hospitals are overloaded with people needing respirators.

In Ontario - 30 perfectly healthy people have died from this virus. While this is not the end of civilization - it is cause for concern.

Before I contracted this my opinion was similar to yours. But after actually getting the H1N1 virus - my opinion has changed. This is a nasty bug that goes right to your lungs. The adjuvant used in the vaccine is a fairly well understood organic compound and has been used in various parts of Europe for the last 10 years. My advice - get vaccinated before the virus mutates into something more severe.

Stay safe.

Chris

Anonymous on Nov 9 2009, 15:35

Think about it this way: once you're vaccinated, you help stopping further distribution, because your immune system kills all viri that come your way. So getting vaccinated is something like a community saving responsibility. That's how mankind tries to get rid of many illnesses before...

Anonymous on Nov 9 2009, 17:10

You're not always stopping further distribution when you get vaccinated. One of the concerns with H1N1 is that it can mutate and cross the species boundary with ease, unlike H3N2.

H1N1 was recently found to be transmissible from human to feline, and they're seeing if it can transmit back to human from feline. That could be another part of it.

I agree -- panic is probably not necessary, but reminding people to wash their hands and stay home if they're sick is a huge benefit, and if it requires a media panic to do that, then so be it.

Anonymous on Nov 9 2009, 17:26

If you get the seasonal shot, then the same reasoning applies to the H1N1 shot. And while having H1N1 might temporarily reduce your chances of catching the seasonal flu, research shows that you can get both simultaneously with the resulting infection being worse than each separately. Furthermore, having H1N1 does not give you any immunity to the seasonal flu and vice versa. People die from both, so allowing one free reign will only increase the number of deaths. When enough people refrain from getting the shot, then herd immunity will not kick in and the number of deaths will skyrocket. Why would you want to contribute to that?

Anonymous on Nov 9 2009, 17:49

Agreed, Brian,

that's why I had the seasonal shot four weeks ago, and the H1N1 last week... I did have sideeffects of H1N1 shot (shudderfrost, or how do you call that in english?) the first night, but no fever. Still, I also have a normal cold (nose running) right now, but besides that (OK, and some hurtings at the injection location, but only light, and only two days) no problems so far...

Matthias

Anonymous on Nov 9 2009, 18:15