



THE STUDY ABROAD FOUNDATION
AN INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY NETWORK

Swine Influenza A (H1N1) Bulletin No. 3

SAF continues to carefully monitor the situation following the outbreak of **swine influenza A (H1N1)** in Mexico and the spread of the infection internationally. At this time it is possible to provide the following information and advice.

The World Health Organization has declared a Level 6 alert and a Pandemic. A Level 6 alert and a Pandemic relates to the geographical spread of the virus and does not relate to its intensity.

It follows that the advice issued in our earlier bulletins (April 30 and May 8 2009) remains applicable and is generally repeated below.

1. For students who have not departed their home country to join a SAF Program

1.1. SAF will continue to monitor developments and act in accord with advice from relevant government departments in the countries in which our students reside and intend to study as well as from the World Health Organization (WHO) and the US Center for Disease Control. Universities, students and their families should do likewise.

1.2. The number verified deaths from the virus worldwide is around 170, which whilst being regrettable is low in relation to the number some 500,000 deaths due to flu generally. Those people dying from the virus are often especially vulnerable because of preexisting conditions. Most people, especially those in developed countries, who become ill because of the virus, appear to make relatively quick and full recoveries and do not need significant medical treatment. Nevertheless because the virus is new and not well understood there is a need for continued vigilance and caution. It looks increasingly likely that the virus will become dormant or disappear during the summer months. It is possible that the virus will reappear possibly in a more virulent form during the next winter. This now seems to be occurring in the Southern Hemisphere where winter is approaching although the virus does not appear to be more virulent. It is also anticipated that a vaccine will be available in time for the onset of winter in the Northern Hemisphere.

1.3. Students planning to join SAF Programs in the fall should not postpone or cancel program participation at this time. The WHO advises that H1N1 influenza is not containable and therefore governments should not impose travel restrictions.

1.4. The best advice to students families and universities at this time is to remain calm and to balance media coverage (which can be excessive, repetitive and at times sensational) against the considered and authoritative advice of international organizations such as the WHO and governments.

1.5. Public reaction to the spread of swine influenza A (H1N1) has been particularly marked in Japan where media coverage has in some cases resulted in unnecessary alarm. The reaction in China, Taiwan and Korea and elsewhere where SAF has offices has been calmer and more balanced. Whilst the concerns of students and their parents is very understandable, SAF urges all concerned to take an informed and balanced view of developments. In particular we would advise families not to regard all information obtained from the media, blogs and other sources in Asia to be complete and/or accurate, but to check sources and verify information. Passing incomplete and/or inaccurate information to their children aboard and conveying their own anxiety to their children is often upsetting to students and unhelpful.

1.6. Students should check with the SAF office in their country of residence concerning insurance issues.

2. For Students who are presently enrolled in an SAF Program

2.1. The best source of advice for students and their families continues to be the university at which they are studying. All SAF member universities have good services including medical services for international students and are in touch with relevant government agencies concerned with public health and health emergencies. SAF is in touch with member universities so as to be as up-to-date as possible concerning developments. Students should follow the advice of their universities. If individual students have concerns they should contact officials at their universities. They should also feel free to contact SAF.

2.2. There is no need for students to consider returning home at this time. They should remain calm, follow the advice of their host university, pursue their studies and enjoy their time abroad. Students should also follow the general advice offered by governments and relevant agencies in their host countries concerning personal hygiene and travel.

2.3. Universities are places where infections can spread quickly and university officials have contingency plans to deal with outbreaks of infectious diseases.

2.4. In the very unlikely event of students having to curtail their studies and return home SAF will provide necessary assistance.

2.5. SAF will only issue further Bulletins concerning Swine Influenza A (H1N1) if there is a significant and and/or unexpected change in circumstances.

JOHN BELCHER

President
JUNE 12, 2009