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About

Healthcare worker's attitudes towards working during pandemic influenza' is a project designed to explore those factors that might incline/ disincline healthcare workers to work during an outbreak of pandemic influenza. It is anticipated that the results of this project will help UK contingency planning, at both a national and local level, should a flu pandemic occur. Pandemic influenza is one of the most urgent global public health threats. World Health Organization (WHO) models anticipate that pandemic influenza will start out as an avian influenza virus that mutates into a form transmissible between human beings. Once established among people in this form anywhere in the world, its spread to the rest of the globe will be speedy, even if current monitoring arrangements provide some early warning.

> The WHO writes that " today a pandemic is likely to result in 2 to 7.4 million deaths globally. In high income countries alone, accounting for 15% of the world's population, models project a demand for 134–233 million outpatient visits and 1.5–5.2 million hospital admissions. However, the impact of the next pandemic is likely to be the greatest in low income countries because of different population characteristics and the already strained health care resources

Find out more...

An effective response to an influenza pandemic by the NHS depends upon a number of factors, one of which is the personal response made by healthcare workers (HCWs) and their commitment to working so long as they are healthy and able to do so. Contingency planning, & consequently patient care, will therefore be improved if it is possible to predict how different sorts of HCWs, & HCWs in general, will respond to pandemic influenza. By helping to identify the characteristics of those who may be unwilling to work, the study will inform assignments of staff to pandemic work & options for changing the attitudes of those who might otherwise be identified as reluctant. The study may also identify types of provision (e.g. housing at hospitals for HCWs) that would keep pools of nearby staff high, resolve potential travel problems & limit risks to workers' families. If attitudes identified as prevalent are based on misconceptions, an information campaign for HCWs can be mounted to address these, helping to ensure higher attendance for duties than had misconceptions remained in place.

The project is a collaboration between Heart of England (Teaching) PCT, and the University of Birmingham Centre for Biomedical Ethics(CBE) and Centre for the Study of Global Ethics (CSGE), with the Schools of Medicine and Geography. The group is led by Dr Heather Draper (CBE), who has been seconded to the CSGE since November 2006. Other co-applicants include Prof. Tom Sorell (Director of the CSGE), Prof. Sue Wilson, Dr Sheila Greenfield, Prof Jayne Parry (U of B Medical School), and Prof. Judith Petts (U of B School of Geography). From 1st December 2008, Dr Sarah Damery takes over from Dr Jonathan Ives as the research fellow on the project. The project also has a steering committee, compromising of lay and expert members, who will meet regularly throughout the course of the project to oversee its progress.

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