

# Influenza

By: THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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PRAGUE, Czech Republic - The Czech Republic's president says he is opposing a mandatory vaccination program against swine flu for the Czech military.

Vaclav Klaus says he considers the order of Czech military chief of general staff Lt. Gen. Vlastimil Picek to vaccinate 16,000 soldiers "highly controversial, if not unacceptable."

GENEVA - The World Health Organization has rejected as "irresponsible" allegations that swine flu is a fake pandemic. WHO also dismissed claims it colluded with drug companies to bring economic benefit to the industry by playing up the danger of the new H1N1 influenza strain.

TORONTO - A new study says genetic susceptibility is unlikely to be responsible for increased rates of severe H1N1 cases in aboriginal people.

It has been noted with H1N1 and with earlier pandemics that aboriginal people seemed to be more prone to developing severe illness than non-aboriginals.

MEXICO CITY - Mexico City has started giving swine flu vaccinations at subway stations in an effort to reach more people.

City Health Secretary Armando Ahued says the campaign has begun at the 26 busiest stations and will be extended to markets by the end of the week. He spoke to reporters Tuesday. Mexico City has 300,000 vaccine doses and administered 10,200 at subway stops Monday.

ABUJA, Nigeria - Nigerian health officials are reporting the first swine flu-related death in the West African country. The Federal Ministry of Health says a 38-year-old woman in Lagos became sick six weeks ago and died on Jan. 5.

TORONTO - Another new swine flu virus has made the leap to humans, though U.S. officials say it seems almost certain the virus hit a dead end.

The Centers for Disease Control reported Friday that a child from Iowa became infected with a new swine flu virus in September, though the case didn't come to light until November.

OTTAWA - Statistics Canada estimates that nearly 21 million hours of work were lost in November due to the flu. It says 1.5 million employed people reported they were absent from work that month as a result of the H1N1 flu or seasonal flu.

TORONTO - The World Health Organization's top flu expert has struck back at criticism about the agency's handling of the H1N1 pandemic, saying claims that the outbreak was a false alarm are scientifically wrong and irresponsible.

Dr. Keiji Fukuda also denied allegations that the global health organization overhyped the outbreak or was inappropriately influenced by the pharmaceutical industry in declaring the pandemic.

Serbia's health officials say they will stop the purchase of swine flu vaccines from a Swiss pharmaceutical company because of the lack of demand.

Serbia last year ordered 3 million doses, of the vaccine from Novartis AG worth an estimated C24 million (\$35 million).

TORONTO - Canada, which has a large surplus of H1N1 vaccine on its hands, announced Wednesday it will lend some to Mexico.

Canada's NAFTA partner has ordered vaccine from manufacturers Sanofi Pasteur and GlaxoSmithKline, but won't take possession of the bulk of its supply until the end of this month.

MEXICO CITY - Mexico - the epicenter of last year's swine flu outbreak - has received less than half of the 30 million vaccine doses it ordered last year, the country's health secretary said Tuesday.

Health Secretary Jose Angel Cordova said Mexico has struggled to secure enough doses because there are no factories in Mexico producing the vaccine. Meanwhile, some countries have started to sell surplus swine flu vaccines.

TORONTO - The Public Health Agency of Canada says GlaxoSmithKline has filled Canada's entire H1N1 vaccine order.

Canada purchased 50.4 million doses of vaccine from the company, which made the vaccine at its plant near Quebec City.

The Public Health Agency estimates between 40 per cent and 45 per cent of Canadians have been vaccinated against H1N1 flu. But how does that break down by province and territory?

Here are the figures, provided by each jurisdiction:

TORONTO - Softening demand for H1N1 vaccine may be spreading to a World Health Organization-led effort to provide developing countries with some pandemic vaccine, a WHO official said Tuesday.

Dr. Marie-Paule Kieny said some recipient countries appear to be reassessing how much donated H1N1 vaccine they want because of shifting perceptions of the benefits of using significant amounts of vaccine at this point.

PARIS - The French Health Ministry says the country is selling its extra swine flu vaccines to other nations.

The ministry says Qatar has bought 300,000 doses and Egypt is in the process of buying 2 million. Contacts are also under way with Ukraine, Mexico and other countries.

CALGARY - Flu clinics are set to reopen Monday in Alberta and the province's deputy medical officer of health says there's still demand for swine flu vaccinations.

Provincial officials say about one million people in Alberta have been vaccinated so far.

How contagious is swine flu? Less than the novel viruses that have caused big world outbreaks in the past, new research suggests.

If someone in your home has swine flu, your odds of catching it are about one in eight, although children are twice as susceptible as adults, the study found. It is one of the first big scientific attempts to find out how much the illness spreads in homes versus at work or school, and who is most at risk.

JAKARTA, Indonesia - Indonesia has reported 15 more bird flu fatalities in 2009, taking the national death toll to 134.

The Health Ministry says 20 people were infected with bird flu last year and 19 cases were fatal. Four of the deaths had previously been reported. Indonesia had stopped announcing individual cases last March amid a dispute over the sharing of virus samples.