
Reports by the Director-General

Summary progress reports

WHO GLOBAL STRATEGIC INFLUENZA ANTIVIRAL STOCKPILES: OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES FOR DEPLOYMENT OF THE ANTIVIRALS

1. Currently, WHO holds two completely separate stockpiles of oseltamivir, an antiviral agent that can be used for therapy of and prophylaxis against all types of influenza. One stockpile consists of two million adult therapeutic courses in order to promote the establishment of regional stockpiles for use in the developing countries that are most likely to be affected by avian influenza in humans and that are unable to afford oseltamivir. The second stockpile is held by the manufacturer. It consists of three million courses to be used in support of a national rapid containment operation, supported by WHO and aimed at stopping the further spread of an influenza virus with pandemic potential causing sustained human-to-human transmission.

First stockpile

2. Two million adult therapeutic courses of oseltamivir were donated to WHO by the manufacturer in order to support the developing countries that are most likely to be affected by avian influenza in humans and that are unable to afford oseltamivir, helping them to reduce morbidity and mortality in the case of an outbreak of avian influenza in humans and prevent the further spread of such an outbreak. The stockpiled antivirals will expire in 2011; to date, no mechanism has been agreed for replenishment. The stockpile has been allocated in equal measure to the six WHO regional offices, with each office entitled to 300 000 therapeutic courses. These antiviral stockpiles are stored either in regional hubs or in warehouses – located in Geneva (Switzerland) and Dubai (United Arab Emirates) – on behalf of the regional offices. WHO headquarters also retains 200 000 courses of this stockpile in Geneva in order to further support the WHO regions as required.

3. WHO has developed guidelines for the management of this oseltamivir stockpile, outlining the relevant procedures for its utilization. The guidelines, which define the roles of the Secretariat and Member States, are applicable to the 200 000 courses stockpiled in Geneva and have been provided to WHO regional offices to use as a model for the therapeutic courses held regionally.

4. The 200 000 courses of oseltamivir in the Geneva-based stockpile can be released rapidly to any Member States that do not have enough antivirals (and to their immediate neighbours) so that they can

tackle: (1) management of sporadic human infections caused by an influenza virus with pandemic potential, (2) a threat to humans from an avian influenza outbreak in poultry reported to OIE.

Second stockpile

5. The second stockpile is a rapid response stockpile, consisting of three million adult therapeutic courses. It is held by the manufacturer and reserved for donation to WHO for use according to the Organization's assessment of the situation, at the site of the outbreak of a possible human influenza pandemic in order to reduce morbidity and mortality and contain or delay national and international spread. The Secretariat has prepared and posted on the WHO web site a document entitled "WHO interim protocol: rapid operations to contain the initial emergence of pandemic influenza (updated October 2007)".¹ This document outlines a strategy for using antivirals and other measures (for example, quarantine, isolation and social distancing) in any country in order to stop (if possible) or slow the spread of an influenza virus with pandemic potential, if that virus is detected and reported rapidly enough. The rapid response stockpile is donated specifically for this purpose. The stockpile is available to WHO until 2010 although the manufacturer has indicated that, depending on the epidemiological situation, it will, in good faith, give consideration to continuing to donate to the rapid response stockpile after 2010.

6. The WHO interim protocol provides practical guidance on use of the antivirals and on their release from the rapid response stockpile. The interim protocol includes standard operating procedures that provide processes and procedures for: (1) countries to request antivirals; (2) WHO to evaluate countries' requests and notify the manufacturer of the decision to deploy antivirals; (3) WHO and the manufacturer to discharge their responsibilities for deploying oseltamivir; (4) recipient countries to fulfil their responsibilities for receiving, storing, distributing and dispensing the antivirals, and for monitoring and reporting on their use. Once a decision to launch a rapid containment operation has been made by national authorities in collaboration with WHO, the manufacturer is responsible for transporting the antivirals to the nearest international airport in the country in which the operation is being conducted, respecting a time limit of 24 hours from receipt of a request from WHO.

= = =

¹ Accessible on http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/guidelines/draftprotocol/en/.