

LaRC Student Illness Outbreak

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Situation

- Multiple illnesses in the NASA SOAR program managed out of Langley Research Center and hosted at Old Dominion University
- 21 of the 52 high school participants in the SOAR program had contracted an apparent viral illness after arrival at the program

Facts

- All students arrived on 11 July 2009 with the 12th being their first day of activities
- A single student reported being ill on the first day with an upper respiratory illness (URI)
- Other students began reporting illnesses on 17 Jul and were taken to a clinic or hospital for evaluation
- Over the next 4 days a total of 21 students reported being ill and were similarly evaluated
- All students had URI-like or flu-like symptoms
- Three students were screened for Influenza, with one of the tests further evaluated for and positive for H1N1
- Norfolk District Public Health officials were notified and made recommendations to isolate ill students from well students for the duration of symptoms plus 48 hours

Facts (cont)

- Norfolk PH only recommended isolation for ill students. They do not recommend curtailing activities for well students
- All cases were mild with sore throat, cough and mild malaise the predominant symptoms
- Three students were placed on Tamiflu by their treating providers
- All ill students were isolated in rooms with other ill students. All students are housed on the same floor of a single dorm. All dorm rooms house 2-3 students and have a restroom/shower
- SOAR program hired a nurse to manage the student evaluations, if more illnesses occurred

Assessment

- Probable viral illness outbreak in SOAR program, likely due to a student who was ill at the time of in processing
- H1N1 is the likely cause in many of the students who reported ill
- Illnesses were mild in all students
- SOAR program was able to appropriately manage the situation within their resources
- All originally ill students recovered
- 2nd wave of illnesses was possible
- Risk to students from illness was low
- Impact to further illnesses on SOAR program was minimal
- Risk to NASA personnel low and likely no greater than that posed by general population
- Program ended 31 Aug with only one more case reported

Recommendations

- Reinforce hygiene and social distancing practices
- Question all students for the existence of any preexisting medical issues, e.g. moderate/severe asthma or diabetes
- Notify LaRC of new cases and update as required
- Isolate any new case
- Eval all new cases at a clinic or hospital
- Observe new cases frequently for 48 hours (minimum every 4 hours)
- Immediately transport to clinic/hospital any ill child whose symptoms progress
- SOAR program could continue

Recommendations NASA-wide

- All student programs should meet a minimum set of preliminary requirements, actions
- Use a national model as the baseline for preliminary requirements, ie. boy/girl scout camp procedures
- Minimum health screen at in processing, i.e. questionnaire and temperature
- Notify parents not to send recently ill children to camp
 - Alert parents that costs associated with returning a child who was knowingly recently ill would be the parent's responsibility