Medical Provider Communication During the H1N1 Pandemic

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In Emergencies
Good Communication is Key

- Most important element of managing an emergency.
- Most challenging part of emergency management.
- Usually identified as the area needing most improvement in After Action Reports following exercises and emergencies.
H1N1 Response: Multiple Messengers and Messages

- Many Sources of Guidance for Doctors:
  - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
  - California Department of Public Health
  - Hospital Association
  - Physician Specialty Groups
  - Cal-OSHA
  - etc…..
Local Public Health Department Role

- Assistance with sorting out the varying and changing messages.
- Help interpret/clarify guidance.
- Help in applying guidance to reality of the hospital or clinic practice or the school/work setting.
- Setting local recommendations.
- Advising about local situations (eg: lab testing, PPE stockpiles, antiviral stockpiles).
Spring 2009
Novel Influenza Virus Identified

- Fax Broadcast system was being worked on.
- Physician fax list was out of date.
- Collaboration with San Joaquin Medical Society:
  - Shared their updated fax list for both member and non-member physicians.
  - Assisted in sending out faxes for us while our system was being fixed.
Challenges with information distribution

- Multiple faxes going to the same fax number in larger medical groups (e.g., Kaiser, community clinics, hospital-based doctors).

- Faxing is slow if:
  - Only a few phone lines dedicated to the blast fax.
  - Fax is several pages long.

- Hard to keep fax lists up to date.
Challenges with information distribution (cont.)

- Feedback from doctors:
  - Long detailed documents were not read.
  - Keep it brief: 2 pages max, page ideal.
  - Do not use small fonts.

- Most doctors did not want emails.

- Hard to reach every doctor.
Some Solutions

- Arranged 2-3 contacts in the larger practices, to receive advisories by email, who then distributed them to their providers.
- Hospital Infection Control Nurses and Emergency Preparedness Coordinators who helped distribute in their facility.
- Emergency Departments, Urgent/Immediate care clinics.
Other Contacts for Advisories

- Planned Parenthood Clinics
- School Based Health Centers
- School Nursing Coordinators
- Long-term Care Facilities
- Pharmacists
- Veterinarians
Other Methods of Communication

- All medical provider conference calls.
- Phone consultation number at Health Dept. for medical providers separate from public information line.
- Use of local Medical Society Board to advise LHD on communications and course of action in response (eg: vaccine distribution).
Other Methods of Communication (cont.)

- Presentations at hospital Grand Rounds or noontime CME.
- Attend Medical Staff meetings.
- Flu Vaccine Provider Summit.
- H1N1 website with specific Medical Provider sections.