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5/1/2009 9:41 AM

Media Advisory

To: West Virginia Media outlets
Health Care Providers

From: John D. Law
Assistant Secretary

Subject: "Suspect" cases of swine flu

Date: May 1, 2009

Over the past couple of days, there has been, in the media, some discussion of "suspect" cases of swine flu. As we strive to remain your credible source for information during this ongoing event, we will not discuss so-called "suspect" cases, and I encourage our colleagues in the health care arena to adopt the same policy. Given the national situation, we should not be surprised to identify the virus in West Virginia. We will certainly share that development clearly when it occurs, with full respect for the privacy of the patient and the family involved.

A "suspect" case is nothing more than a health care provider sending to the state laboratory a specimen from a patient who is presenting with influenza symptoms and who may have had an opportunity for exposure to swine flu. This is a therapeutic protocol we encourage. In most cases in West Virginia, we hope the tests will be negative.

Until there is a positive test, however, to comment publicly in the media on these tests, other than to generally say they are being done according to protocol, would be a disservice to both the patients and to the readers and listeners in the media community who may not realize that testing of a "suspect" case is a good, routine part of the protocol to prevent the spread of this virus.

There are no confirmed cases in West Virginia as of this date.

As always, the best way to avoid contracting swine influenza is to wash your hands frequently, sneeze and cough into your sleeve or arm, avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth and stay home if you are sick.

For additional information on swine influenza, go to www.wvidep.org or www.wvflu.org.