What we know about COVID-19 and influenza

THE LATEST ON THE COVID-19 GLOBAL SITUATION & READINESS FOR INFLUENZA DURING THE PANDEMIC
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Current global situation
As of 09 November 2020, 10:00AM CEST

• Nearly 49 million cases
  • 5 countries with highest cumulative number of cases
    - United States of America
    - India
    - Brazil
    - Russian Federation
    - France

• > 1.2 million deaths
  • 5 countries with highest cumulative number of deaths
    - United States of America
    - Brazil
    - India
    - Mexico
    - The United Kingdom
Current global situation
Cases reported to WHO as of 09 November 2020, 10:00AM CEST

* Cases depicted by bars; deaths depicted by line
COVID-19 cases reported in the last 7 days
Per million population

FROM 02 NOVEMBER 2020, 10:00AM CEST to 08 NOVEMBER 2020, 10:00 AM CEST
COVID-19 deaths reported in the last 7 days
Per million population

FROM 02 NOVEMBER 2020, 10:00AM CEST to 08 NOVEMBER 2020, 10:00 AM CEST
Readiness for influenza during the COVID-19 pandemic

- Different respiratory viruses co-circulate, including seasonal influenza and are responsible for many acute infections and influenza-like illnesses.
- Each year, seasonal influenza affects individuals in every country and results in up to one billion cases, three to five million severe cases, and up to 650,000 respiratory-related deaths worldwide.¹
- Countries should be prepared and ensure optimal management of influenza during COVID-19.

Actions to ensure readiness include:

1. **Plan** for influenza with adaptations
2. **Prevent**
   - Vaccination
   - Personal measures
3. **Care**
   - Clinical management
   - Antivirals
4. **Test & monitor**
   - Surveillance
   - Multiplex testing
5. **Communicate**
   - Regular communication
   - Engage with public

¹ [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5935243/](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5935243/)
Planning for your influenza season

- The Southern Hemisphere has already experienced its influenza season this year (May to September 2020), providing insights which may be useful to the Northern Hemisphere

- A significant reduction in seasonal influenza cases compared to previous years was observed in the Southern Hemisphere

- This may be due to restrictions put in place for COVID-19. **Appropriate planning is important and may include:**
  - Public health and social measures for COVID-19 and influenza

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Preventing seasonal influenza during a COVID-19 pandemic
How to prevent seasonal influenza

Administer a safe influenza vaccine every year to prevent severe disease in risk groups\(^1\)
Ensure individual measures are implemented\(^2\)

1. WHO SAGE Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Recommendations during the COVID-19 Pandemic
Certain populations are identified as priority groups for influenza vaccination

- The following populations are identified for priority use of the influenza vaccine:\(^1\):
  - Young children
  - Pregnant women
  - Older persons
  - Persons with underlying health conditions
  - Health workers

- Pregnant women and young children are identified as a risk group for seasonal influenza but not for COVID-19

- During COVID-19 and if supplies are limited, health workers and older persons should be considered as the highest priority risk groups for influenza vaccination\(^2\)

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\(^1\) [https://www.who.int/wer/2012/wer8747.pdf?ua=1](https://www.who.int/wer/2012/wer8747.pdf?ua=1)

\(^2\) WHO SAGE Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Recommendations during the COVID-19 Pandemic
Population groups with increased risk for severe disease

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seasonal influenza</th>
<th>COVID-19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Young children (&lt;59 months)</td>
<td>• Older persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Older persons (&gt;65 years old)</td>
<td>• Persons with chronic conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pregnant women</td>
<td>- cardiac conditions (hypertension &amp; cardiovascular disease)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Persons with chronic conditions</td>
<td>- chronic neurological disorders, including stroke, chronic lung disease (e.g., COPD)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- cardiac conditions (hypertension &amp; cardiovascular disease)</td>
<td>- diabetes</td>
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<tr>
<td>- chronic lung conditions (asthma or COPD)</td>
<td>- chronic kidney disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- endocrine disorders (diabetes)</td>
<td>- some immunosuppressed conditions (e.g., cancer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- neurological disorders (stroke &amp; neurodevelopmental conditions)</td>
<td>• Obese persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- chronic kidney disease</td>
<td>• Persons who smoke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- metabolic disorders</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- hematologic disorders</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- chronic liver disease and other immunosuppressed conditions, including cancer</td>
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<tr>
<td>&amp; HIV/AIDS</td>
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<tr>
<td>- chronic conditions requiring immunosuppressive therapy, such as</td>
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<tr>
<td>chronic steroid treatment or chemotherapy</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- Chronic kidney disease
- Metabolic disorders
- Hematologic disorders
- Chronic liver disease and other immunosuppressed conditions, including cancer & HIV/AIDS
- Chronic conditions requiring immunosuppressive therapy, such as chronic steroid treatment or chemotherapy

Considerations to prevent infections of seasonal influenza in the context of COVID-19

- Continue to promote personal measures to prevent transmission of both influenza and COVID-19
- Begin planning procurement of influenza vaccines for the upcoming influenza season
- Maintain routine influenza vaccination programmes
- Consider prioritization of risk groups where vaccine supply is limited
Clinical pathway for patients presenting with influenza-like symptoms

**SCREENING & TRIAGE**
Persons presented to health facilities should be evaluated for influenza-like symptoms.
If symptoms are present, infection prevention control measures should be put in place.

**CLINICAL ASSESSMENT**
Patient with suspected influenza should be evaluated for presence of risk factors for severe disease and complications such as severe pneumonia or exacerbation of chronic disease.

**TREATMENT**
Patients presenting with severe disease and those at risk for severe disease (regardless of disease severity) should be treated with antivirals regardless of testing capacity as soon as possible.

**TESTING**
Patients with severe or complicated disease or those with risk factors (regardless of severity) should be tested with rapid molecular assays. After results are obtained treatment can be modified.
Clinical pathway of at risk patients with suspected influenza

- Patients with influenza-like symptoms
  - Test for influenza
  - If test is positive, continue antiviral treatment
  - If test is negative, treatment may be modified depending on severity of disease
- Patients belonging to high risk group for severe influenza
  - Start antiviral treatment
  - Test for influenza
  - If needed, add supportive treatment such as oxygen or ventilation
Considerations to prepare for clinical management of patients with influenza in the context of COVID-19

**Training**
Train health workers and laboratory personnel on clinical management and infection, prevention and control measures.

**Structural**
Ensure facilities are ready to surge care areas to manage severe and critically ill patients including screening areas, emergency areas, and intensive care.

**Supply**
Ensure sufficient supplies of diagnostics, personnel protective equipment, antivirals and oxygen and other essential medicines and advanced respiratory support devices to provide critical care.

**System/referral**
Ensure that integrated screening and referral systems for both COVID-19 and influenza are in place for rapid diagnosis, prevention of transmission and treatment.

Set up clear care pathways at all levels of health systems.
How to differentiate between influenza and COVID-19

• Both influenza and COVID-19 are respiratory diseases with similar modes of transmission

• The two infections often have similar symptoms, with the exception of loss of taste and smell; which seems more specific to COVID-19

• **Only testing can differentiate between influenza and COVID-19**

People of all ages who experience severe symptoms such as:

- fever and/or cough associated with difficulty breathing,
- shortness of breath,
- chest pain or pressure, or
- loss of speech or movement

should seek medical care immediately
WHO & global influenza surveillance

- The Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System (GISRS) is used to conduct global influenza surveillance.\(^1\)
- Since COVID-19 emerged, GISRS has supported the response through the detection of COVID-19 cases\(^2,3,4\) in addition to other COVID-19 surveillance and control activities\(^5\).
- National Influenza Centres (NICs) should remain vigilant for novel influenza viruses with pandemic potential and seasonal influenza virus variants.

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1. Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System
2. Preparing GISRS for the upcoming influenza seasons during the COVID-19 pandemic – practical considerations
4. Operational considerations for COVID-19 surveillance using GISRS
Considerations to ensure continued monitoring & surveillance of influenza in the context of COVID-19

- **Monitor**: Maintain routine sentinel surveillance of diseases caused by respiratory pathogens, such as influenza
- **Monitor**: Maintain timely and routine reporting of influenza data to global or regional platforms
- **Monitor**: Continue COVID-19 surveillance strategies and ensure samples for influenza testing are sent to National Influenza Centres (NICs)
- **Test**: Prioritize sampling and testing and use multiplex testing for influenza and COVID-19 in sentinel surveillance sites, where possible
Transparent communication & infodemic management

• Develop and adapt communication materials to inform individuals of the differences and similarities between influenza and COVID-19, how to protect themselves and when to seek care

• Timely, regular and transparent communication is important to build trust within communities

• Mis- and dis-information is often rapidly spread through social media. Several techniques can be employed to manage the infodemic:
  - **Employ social listening methods** (e.g., community feedback, frequently asked questions from healthcare systems and hotlines, and social media rumour tracking) to shape timely and tested health information
  - **Engage communities** to address pandemic fatigue
  - **Use trusted sources** to disseminate and amplify messaging
Considerations on how to communicate and to engage with the public

- Have a communication plan ready to accompany influenza vaccination programmes during COVID-19
- Communicate regularly and transparently on the situation and on social and safety measures
- Develop and adapt communication materials to inform about the differences and similarities between influenza and COVID-19; how to protect themselves; as well as when and where to seek care
- Employ social listening methods such as community feedback and social media rumour tracking
  Recommend trusted sources to disseminate and amplify messaging
WHO resources on influenza during COVID-19

- **Readiness for influenza during the COVID-19 pandemic**
  The policy brief provides a concise summary of information and considerations to ensure optimal management of influenza during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Operational considerations for COVID-19 surveillance using GISRS**
  This document is intended for Ministry of Health and other government officials responsible for COVID-19 and influenza surveillance and summarizes the operational considerations for leveraging influenza surveillance systems to incorporate COVID-19 testing.

- **Preparing GISRS for the upcoming influenza seasons during the COVID-19 pandemic – practical considerations**

- **Public health surveillance for COVID-19: interim guidance**

- **Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System**
  [https://www.who.int/influenza/gisrs_laboratory/en/](https://www.who.int/influenza/gisrs_laboratory/en/)

- **Overview of Public Health and Social Measures in the context of COVID-19**
  The document is intended to inform national and local health authorities and other decision-makers at all levels.

- **Vaccines against influenza**
  This position paper is concerned mainly with vaccines and vaccination against seasonal (epidemic) influenza.

- **WHO SAGE Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Recommendations during the COVID-19 Pandemic**
  Interim recommendations from the WHO Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) on Immunization for influenza vaccination during the COVID-19 pandemic.
  [https://www.who.int/immunization/policy/position_papers/Interim_SAGE_influenza_vaccination_recommendations.pdf?ua=1](https://www.who.int/immunization/policy/position_papers/Interim_SAGE_influenza_vaccination_recommendations.pdf?ua=1)

- **Considerations for implementing and adjusting public health and social measures in the context of COVID-19**
  An interim guidance.
How to protect ourselves & others

9 important COVID-19 prevention measures

01 Stay home and self-isolate if you feel unwell, even with mild symptoms

02 Clean hands frequently with soap & water for 40 seconds or with alcohol-based hand rub

03 Cover your nose and mouth with a disposable tissue or flexed elbow when you cough or sneeze

04 Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth

05 Maintain a minimum physical distance of at least 1 metre from others

06 Stay away from crowds and avoid poorly ventilated indoor spaces

07 Use a fabric mask where physical distancing of at least 1 metre is not possible

08 Use a medical / surgical mask if you may be at higher risk (age, medical conditions)

09 Regularly clean & disinfect frequently touched surfaces
WHO guidance on COVID-19

VIDEO RESOURCES

Masks

Medical and fabric masks: who wears what when?

How to wear a fabric mask safely

How to wear a fabric mask

How to wear a medical mask

Transmission

How to break the chains of transmission

Protecting ourselves

How to protect yourself against COVID-19

Seven steps to prevent the spread of the virus
Call for poster submissions

Third WHO Conference on Infodemic Management – A whole-of-society approach

30 Nov – 11 Dec 2020

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION:
20 November 2020

Submit your digital poster about country experience in mitigating the COVID-19 infodemic.

Selected posters will be accepted and summarized as part of the conference proceedings.

Sharing your country’s experience in infodemic management can help improve other countries’ strategies.
