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Two Questions To Ask About Bird Flu Vaccines

By John Hart

The results of a government-funded study show that very high doses of an avian influenza vaccine, supplied by Sanofi-Aventis, are needed to produce an immune response that should guard against the virus. 54% of the volunteers received two shots of 90 micrograms each, 28 days apart. A typical flu shot is 15 micrograms.

Based on the requirements seen in the study, the U.S. government's current stockpile of vaccines would provide enough for only about four million people, according to Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy & Infectious Diseases.

The problem isn't just a matter of dosage. It is also a matter of production. Flu vaccines are produced using hen's eggs, a 50-year old technology, if it can be called that. Automated machines inject hundreds of thousands of eggs, then an 11-day waiting period begins while the eggs incubate, brewing viruses that are then killed and bottled. To produce millions of the final product takes about six months.

Then there's the question no one seems to be asking: if we plan to rely upon chicken eggs to incubate an H5N1 virus, how do we know the H5N1 virus won't kill the eggs? H5N1 already kills chickens. Shouldn't we assume it also kills a high percentage of chicken eggs? Sanofi-Aventis is spending \$150 million of its own money building a new vaccine-making plant based on the theory that H5N1 won't kill the eggs. By the way, eggs have to be ordered many months in advance for this antiquated process.

And where does Sanofi-Aventis plan to get all these egg-laying chickens anyway? Millions of chickens have been slaughtered worldwide already and a pre-pandemic scenario could kill off whole U.S. chicken farms at once.

However, there is a new vaccine technology on the horizon. It's called cell-based vaccine. Giant vats of living cells, such as dog kidney cells, multiply and then are inoculated with the virus. There are two companies already in the marketplace, one in Holland, one in Germany, but the technology won't be widely available for years. The FDA must review the entire method before any equipment can be imported to the U.S.

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Clearly, the U.S. has waited for a new virus to come along to spur vaccine research. We may have waited too long. H5N1 isn't waiting. It's figuring out how to mutate into human-to-human transmission. In fact, the rate of mutation is alarming. Dr. Robert Webster, Ph.D., Member, St. Jude Faculty Rose Marie Thomas Chair, calls H5N1 "the most frightening virus I've ever seen in 40 years of research."

If you and your family are counting on a vaccine to protect you against H5N1 (Avian Influenza), don't bet on it. There are still too many unanswered questions and too many risks.

Mr. Hart is a medical journalist/researcher, and the author of "Killer Bird Flu...Get Ready Now!" a paperback that outlines what families can do to get prepared for the coming pandemic. Learn more at

<http://www.buynanomask.com>

Is The Bird Flu Going To Be The Death Of Us? It Can Be...

By Larry Evans

All this talk to bird flu has really thrown us all into a tizzy these days but is it something that we really need to be so concerned about? Well, this really depends on who you ask. Some experts will tell you that this new outbreak of bird flu is going to wipe out one third of the worlds population while another stands by and simply scoffs at such a prediction. Getting down to the bottom of the bird flu is hard to do and in the end there is not much you can do about it either way.

So far the bird flu has not spread to all countries, and the vast majority of those who have been affected actually handled the birds or came into contact with contaminated spaces. So if this is anything to go by, if you do not have chickens then you should be safe from the bird flu. There have been no reports as of yet of any bird flu victims catching the flu from other people, only from the birds themselves. I don't know about you but this certainly puts my mind at rest somewhat.

There is more than one strain of bird flu however and they all act a little differently and like any other virus is subject to constant mutations. The current strain of bird flu may not be passed from human to human yet but in time it may learn to transmit itself in this fashion. Viruses are smart and they learn quickly so even if you have no contact with any birds you need to watch out and take some precautions.

You will need to start being even more hygienic that you already are to avoid catching bird flu. Wash your hands more often and do not touch people if you do not have to. For example when you are out and you meet someone don't necessarily shake their hand and if you do wash your hands right away. This is your health and it is even more important than always being overly polite.

There are also vaccines that are being developed as you read that will hopefully be able to lower your chances of contracting bird flu. These vaccines have gotten a lot of hype lately and we can only hope that they are as effective as they are said to be in containing and eliminating the bird flu.

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