

Brazil Has 6 Confirmed and 30 Suspected Cases of Swine Flu

Contributed by José Wilson Miranda
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With two more cases of swine flu confirmed this Friday, May 8, Brazil now has officially six people infected with the influenza virus H1N1. The last case is that of a 21-year-old college student from Rio de Janeiro who got the virus from a friend who had traveled to Mexico.

According to Brazil's Health minister, José Gomes Temporão, this is the first Brazilian case of a domestic (not from another country) person to person contagion, something that has happened only in six other countries.

The student identified only as B.L, had contact with the friend at Rio's International Airport (Galeão), on May 3, the day he returned from Cancun, in Mexico. Both youngsters have been admitted to the Fundão Hospital and are being treated there, in isolation.

"There is limited transmission," said Temporão. "I wish to call attention to this. Up to now this is the only case of person-to-person transmission in Brazil. I thought that the virus would not get to Brazil, but it did. Now we need to maintain the quality of our work."

108 people had contact with both patients and according to Brazil's health authorities, all of them are being monitored. "We are having daily monitoring and the standard procedure is that all of them remain at home. Everything that Brazil is doing follows rigorously the international protocol contained in the rules and procedures of the WHO's epidemiological safety system," said the minister.

A 7-year-old girl of Santa Catarina state in the south of the country, who also got the virus, has already left the hospital. Authorities say she cannot transmit the virus anymore. The girl seems to have contracted the flu in Florida. A fourth patient with the new flu is already doing well after spending a week in the hospital.

The two other cases are from São Paulo and Minas Gerais. The first one had returned recently from Miami, the second had visited Mexico. Both stayed at home and are already feeling well. Their families were monitored and didn't get the virus.

Brazil has also 30 cases in which authorities suspect the individual was infected by the swine influenza virus.

Meanwhile Uruguay extended sanitary controls to borders with Argentina and Brazil following the confirmation of several cases of the influenza A/H1N1 in its neighboring countries.

These controls are basically body temperature tests with thermo graphic cameras plus a simple questionnaire detailing recent trips and a phone number where the traveler can be monitored regularly on any of the possible symptoms.

The A/H1N1 flu virus takes approximately ten days to manifest itself after contagion.

So far the procedure was only applied on travelers arriving at the Carrasco international airport from Mexico, United States and Canada, said Villar.

The Uruguayan official described the contingency plan as "dynamic" and if needed "further measures have been planned and will be applied." Uruguay's response followed Argentina's Thursday announcement of one "imported" confirmed case and four in Brazil.

Uruguay so far has three persons at their homes under surveillance, one of them Mexican who arrived from Mexico and had some mild symptoms of the virus disease. However it was later confirmed that the cases were seasonal flu, quite common at the beginning of winter in Uruguay.

Uruguayan sanitary authorities also decided that all sanitary and health personnel in the frontier passes must be vaccinated against seasonal flu and must use sanitary masks and discardable gloves.

Uruguayan Public Health minister Maria Julia Muñoz said that the seasonal flu vaccine is not effective against the A/H1N1 strain but can help mitigate its effects if the virus finally makes it into Uruguay.

Meanwhile from Geneva the World Health Organization, WHO, said that at 16:00 GMT, 8 May 2009, 25 countries had officially reported 2500 cases of influenza A (H1N1) infection.

Mexico has reported 1204 laboratory confirmed human cases of infection, including 44 deaths. The United States has reported 896 laboratory confirmed human cases, including two deaths.

The following countries have reported laboratory confirmed cases with no deaths: Austria (1), Brazil (6), Canada (214), China, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (1), Colombia (1), Costa Rica (1), Denmark (1), El Salvador (2), France (12), Germany (11), Guatemala (1), Ireland (1), Israel (7), Italy (6), Netherlands (3), New Zealand (5), Poland (1), Portugal (1), Republic of Korea (3), Spain (88), Sweden (1), Switzerland (1) and the United Kingdom (34).

WHO is not recommending travel restrictions related to the outbreak of the influenza A (H1N1) virus.

Bzz/MP