

## Recommendations of the National Task Force for Communicable Diseases for Hajj 2009 and Umra

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While taking in to account the recommendations of the Expert Panel convened by the Ministry of Health, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (June 27-30, 2009) and the resolution of the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Committee (22<sup>nd</sup> July 2009); and reviewing the available scientific information about the spread of H1N1 pandemic, the National Task Force for Communicable Diseases during its meeting on August 12, 2009 makes the following recommendations for implementation in Pakistan:

- i. The initiatives of the KSA MOH to meet the impending public health challenge be fully supported and recommendations actively pursued before, during and after the Pilgrimage.
- ii. Pakistan's national action plan for pandemic influenza developed by the National Task Force for Communicable Diseases be circulated to the provincial health departments for feed back and implemented vigilantly by all stakeholders as per set guidelines.
- iii. All Hajjis, Umra visitors, healthcare providers and other members of the Hajj Mission 2009 be administered seasonal influenza vaccine, at least two weeks prior to their departure for KSA.
- iv. If available and licensed by the regulatory authorities, the influenza A (H1N1) vaccine be administered to all Hajjis, Umra visitors, and healthcare providers and other members of the Hajj Mission 2009.
- v. An extensive health education campaign be undertaken for Hajjis and Umra visitors to promote non-pharmaceutical measures for prevention and control of Pandemic Influenza.
- vi. The medical mission accompanying Hajjis must carry appropriate amounts of antiviral drugs for H1N1 treatment, N-95 Masks and Ambient Temperature Viral Transport Medium.
- vii. The Pakistan's Medical Mission must also have adequate number of Rapid Response Teams on board comprising of public health professionals, infection control specialist and laboratory personnel. The team leader shall regularly monitor the situation in KSA and submit a daily report to the Technical Committee in Pakistan for undertaking specific measures before arrival of Hajjis back in the country.
- viii. On return of Hajjis, an adequate screening arrangements be made for A (H1N1) at ports of entry in order to limit its spread using current measures such as thermal scanners, temporary quarantine facilities etc).
- ix. In accordance with the national action plan, 01 national, 04 provincial, 01 AJK and 06 regional (geographical distribution to be based on needs) reference laboratories be established / strengthened by November 2009 to cope with possible increased numbers of cases.
- x. The following high risk groups for severe pandemic influenza postpone their participation in Hajj and Umra for this year:
  - a. Elderly; over the age of 65 years
  - b. Pregnant women
  - c. People with chronic diseases; serious cardiovascular diseases, asthma, tuberculosis and other respiratory diseases, uncontrolled diabetes
  - d. Children under the age of 12 years

**Note: The recommendations are based on available scientific knowledge till date and will be updated as more epidemiological information becomes available.**