

EMBARGO: 12:00H (Singapore time) Wednesday, 18 January 2006

LANCET FORUM SET TO IDENTIFY GAPS IN INFLUENZA PANDEMIC PREPARATIONS

Jointly organised by The Lancet, Elsevier Health Sciences and Reed Exhibitions, The Lancet Asia Medical Forum 2006 on preparing for the next pandemic influenza will provide clinicians and policy makers with the latest information for dealing with an outbreak and identify gaps in preparation plans. The Forum — 'Preparing for Pandemic Influenza: The Avian Dimension and Other Emerging Threats' — will take place between 3 - 4 May 2006 in Singapore.

Many questions remain to be answered to prepare adequately for pandemic influenza. These include the role of wild birds in transmitting the disease, the virulence of avian influenza in human beings, and the molecular mechanisms that could permit human-to-human transmission.

This Forum will bring together many of the world's leading experts together to address these issues and others. Speakers will include John Oxford, Professor of Virology at St Bartholomew's and the Royal London Hospital, Queen Mary's School of Medicine and Dentistry, London, UK and Dr Klaus Stöhr, Head of the Global Influenza Programme at the World Health Organization (WHO).

Sessions on the first day of the Forum will address the evolution of avian influenza viruses, the lessons learnt from the Dutch H7N7 avian influenza outbreak, and the development of vaccines against pandemic influenza.

Day Two will focus on pandemic preparedness and cover issues surrounding building drug stockpiles, WHO's planning, non-pharmaceutical control options, and communication to the public and between nations.

John McConnell, Editor of The Lancet Infectious Diseases, states: "An influenza pandemic could have a devastating effect on human health and the global economy. It is vital that health professionals and policy makers have the information necessary to prepare for such a pandemic. In Singapore, we will

bring together the world's leading experts on influenza with the aim of providing a complete briefing on pandemic preparedness."

Professor Satkunanantham, Director of Medical Services, Singapore Ministry of Health, states: "The Lancet Forum offers a platform for scientists, clinicians, policy makers and the industry to congregate to develop a better understanding of the virus, the epidemiology, the impact and the control of the human disease. It also creates a distinct opportunity for the different groups of professionals to work together and be prepared to respond globally to the threat of an influenza pandemic."

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Notes to editors:

The Lancet Asia Medical Forum 2006 - 'Preparing for Pandemic Influenza: The Avian Dimension and Other Emerging Threats' will take place between 3 – 4 May 2006.

Journalists who would like to attend the Forum free of charge will need to seek accreditation. Please visit www.thelancet.com/asiaforum for more information.

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