

H1N1 flu spreads to remote corners of the world-WHO

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* H1N1 flu reaches Pacific, Caribbean, Indian Ocean islands

* Real number of cases unknown because most not lab tested

GENEVA, July 27 (Reuters) - There may be no escape from H1N1 pandemic flu, which according to the latest World Health Organisation figures has spread to the most remote parts of the planet including popular island getaways.

In a snapshot published on Monday, the WHO said more than 20 countries and overseas territories had had their first lab-confirmed cases of the new virus, widely known as swine flu.

These include holiday destinations such as the Seychelles, Turks and Caicos, St. Kitts and Nevis, Netherlands Antilles, Belize and France's Reunion Island, as well as isolated spots such as Tonga and American Samoa in the Pacific and the Solomon Islands in the Indian Ocean.

H1N1 flu, which is a genetic mix of human, bird and swine viruses, has also found its way to Bhutan in the Himalayas and Andorra, an independent state tucked between Spain and France. Conflict-ridden Afghanistan and Sudan have also had their first confirmed infections in recent days.

The emergence of the never-before-seen virus in Mexico and the United States and its fast international spread caused the WHO to declare in June that a pandemic was under way. The U.N. agency has said it is impossible to stop it from circulating, and is monitoring it closely for signs of mutation or combination with other flu viruses.

While most patients have had mild flu-like symptoms, such as fever and vomiting, pregnant women and people with diabetes and other diseases have been vulnerable to more serious effects. An estimated 816 people have died from infection to date, according to the WHO's latest tally.

The total number of people infected with H1N1 flu is not known, and countries are no longer testing and reporting each individual case of a person falling ill. The WHO has said more emphasis should be placed on preventing infection and treating the most serious cases to avoid unnecessary death.

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