

H1N1: New swine flu strain resistant to Tamiflu

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CLEVELAND -- Could there be a new strain of H1N1? That's what health officials are investigating after a few cases seem to be resistant to the treatment drug, Tamiflu.

It was discovered that a few patients at Duke University Medical Centers and a few others overseas in whales were diagnosed with a strain of flu too strong for Tamiflu to treat.

Health officials with the CDC say this doesn't indicate a health emergency. But there is concern over what appears to be mutations of the virus.

"We are unable to say if their deaths were caused by influenza, they are influenza associated but they had medical issues that were compromising their health," says Megan Davies, a North Carolina State Epidemiologist.

The virus is just as severe, but this new mutation of H1N1 has a different characteristic. It might not be treatable with medications currently available.

"This resistance is from a mutation but its doesn't mean H1N1 in general is mutating. It's a mutation that has occurred in a small number of patients," says Dr. Zack Moore, a Medical Epidemiologist.

Four patients treated at duke university medical centers and 5 more across the Atlantic in Whales. Health officials with the CDC are investigating the connection - if any - between these patients.

Doctors at Duke are still treating one patient who appeared to have the mutated H1N1 strain with the drug Relenza. She appears to be recovering.

"The vast majority of people with influenza do not even receive antiviral treatment. This mutation is a moot point to most of us. However, it's something we have to pay attention to when we see it," says Davies.

Doctor Frank Esper with Rainbow Babies Children's Hospital at University Hospital tells us in November, over 1 thousand H1N1 cases were screened for resistance and only 10 were Tamiflu resistant.

So, Tamiflu is still able to treat the majority of swine flu cases. Esper says that these viruses are constantly changing so there's no surprise it mutated to survive.

Vaccination against H1N1 still appears to be effective.

Dr. Frank Esper from University Hospitals joined Channel 3 News Today, to talk about what this strain means for you.

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