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ECU fights spread of the flu

By Josh Humphries
The Daily Reflector

Tuesday, September 15, 2009

East Carolina University is making plans for a potential outbreak of H1N1 influenza on campus.

ECU's Student Health Services department already has seen more than 50 cases of the virus this month, and officials want students to be informed on how to best avoid getting the illness and how to avoid spreading it throughout campus.

"We have been preparing for several months, and we are not really sure what we were going to be facing, but it looks like it is not going to be too bad," Tom Pohlman, environmental manager at ECU, said.

Pohlman said officials have modified plans that were originally developed as a response to the potential outbreak of avian flu in 2006. That virus did not become a pandemic and the symptoms were far more severe than the H1N1 flu, he said, but the plans have been modified and put into place if a huge outbreak hits.

Most health officials agree that the H1N1 virus, often called "swine flu," is less severe than the regular seasonal flu. But students should still avoid coming to class and spreading the virus if possible, Pohlman said.

Provost Marilyn Sheerer recently sent a letter to faculty asking them to relax attendance policies to encourage sick students to stay home.

"Do not require a doctor's note for students, faculty, or staff to confirm illness or recovery," Sheerer wrote in the letter. "Doctors' offices and student health facilities may be very busy and may not be able to provide such documentation in a timely way. Residential students with flu-like illness who live relatively close to the campus should return to their home to keep from making others sick."

Each professor ultimately has control over their classroom, Pohlman said.

"We expect some abuse but it will be pretty obvious when students try to attend class when they are sick and we don't want them to do that," he said.

Sheerer referred to a potential flu outbreak on campus as being similar to a severe storm bearing down on the state. She advised the faculty to have action plans if a large number of students should come down with the flu.

"The storm we are facing is very real and it's called the H1N1 influenza virus," Sheerer wrote. "This extremely contagious virus, also known as the swine flu, is impacting every higher education campus in the country."

Many universities have isolated students with the virus or set up special residences, but ECU does not have room for that, officials said.

Sheerer advises students with flu-like illness to seek attention if they have a medical condition that puts them at increased risk of severe illness from flu, are concerned about their illness or develop severe symptoms such as fever, shortness of breath, chest pain or pressure or rapid breathing.

ECU's Student Health Services has flu kits available for students who seek treatment there. The kits include things like fever-reducing medications, a reusable thermometer, throat lozenges and water for hydration. Pohlman said the kits likely will include easy-to-prepare meals, especially for students who live off-campus.

Student Health Services is prepared to handle an increase in students seeking medical attention, but officials do
not want to see an unnecessary rush.

“If you don't get the severe symptoms, you should just stay home until you have been fever free without medication for 24 hours,” Pohlman said.

Contact Josh Humphries at jhumphries@coxnc.com or (252) 329-9565.

Center for Disease Control tips for protection

Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it. Cough in your sleeve, if you don't have a tissue available.

Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners also are effective if soap and water are not available.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

Try to avoid close contact with sick people and large crowded areas like concerts, nightclubs, football games and parties.

If you are sick with flu-like symptoms, the CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone without taking fever-reducing medication.
East Carolina University stresses flu prevention.

By PARUL JOSHI
Reporter
Published: September 15, 2009

East Carolina University is spreading the word about H1N1 on campus. The Student Health Service Center has had more than 50 students get sick with flu-like symptoms since school started. Health Care workers presume they’re dealing with H1N1.

These days you can’t go far on campus at ECU without running into flu warnings.

Daniel Martinez says, “Everyone on campus is flipping out. Everyone’s scared about it. They’re talking about it, it’s a big issue.”

Students like Glory Carrasquillo appreciate the warnings. She says, “I think everybody’s worried. Everybody went to their homes wherever it was over the summer and may have contracted it and been exposed to it.”

Student Health Service Director Jolene Jernigan says it’s all about education. She says, “Hand washing, sneeze in your sleeve, social distancing and if you have the flu stay away from people and self-isolate for 24 hours or go home if you can.”

The health center is even assembling thousands of flu kits. Jernigan says, “That includes some water, soup, a reusable thermometer, some hand wipes some Tylenol, Advil, things they can take back to their room and survive.”
They're also showing students the proper way to wash your hands. Jernigan says, "Wash with your hands open in between your fingers around your fingernails and you can sing 'Happy Birthday.'"

The light shows how many germs stayed behind, which is why Jernigan says it's so tough to keep the campus flu free.

Jernigan says they've also opened up on online portal which allows students to fill out a template that identifies they're symptoms. They're connected with a phone nurse who decides whether the student needs to come in.
Swine flu hits colleges hard

Sick students swamp clinics

BY ERIC FERRERI, Staff Writer

Take it from Caroline Murray: The swine flu is no fun.

The Peace College freshman had barely figured out where her classes meet when the pandemic H1N1 virus floored her. Body aches. Sore throat. A fever that hit 103.5. She missed a week of class.

"It was my plan to do school work, but I really couldn't," said Murray, who is from Raleigh. "It was really awful."

Murray is one of hundreds of Triangle college students to fall victim this semester. A type of influenza easily passed among young people, H1N1 is circulating so commonly that health officials don't even test for it specifically. They simply say students have "influenza-like illness" and assume the strain is H1N1.

The largest numbers are at UNC-Chapel Hill, which through last week had nearly 700 cases. That's more than twice the 309 cases reported by N.C. State over essentially the same period, and NCSU is a larger institution.

Most other universities report far lower numbers. Wake Forest has seen about 200 cases, and Duke has had about 170. At Peace, the small women's college in Raleigh, Murray is one of 13 students to get it.

The totals are likely higher. These numbers represent only students who seek help from a campus health office.

Universities say the cases they're seeing are mild; across the nation, there have been just three reported H1N1-related deaths on college campuses, the most recent at Cornell University last week.

So far, illnesses haven't created mass class absences, officials say.

But at UNC-CH, campus health workers are watching the numbers carefully. Last week, the H1N1 cases at the student health service represented 29 percent of all maladies reported there, said Campus Health Services Director Mary Covington.

"Anytime you get over 15 percent, it's high," Covington said.

So health officials urge students to wash their hands a lot and stay isolated if they feel symptoms.

"This is a rather mild illness," Covington said. "You don't really have to seek medical attention."
Still, plenty of students do so. At NCSU, health officials are treading water.

"All of our appointments are full at the beginning of the day so we’re doing the best we can to fit people in," said Jerry Barker, director of NCSU's student health services. "We’re maxed out, which is scary given we might see larger numbers."

At Peace College, the 13 students diagnosed with H1N1 symptoms so far this fall are less than 2 percent of the student population of 732. Dean of Students Candice Johnston attributes the low numbers to an aggressive hygiene campaign.

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**Just tell them they'll puke**

An NCSU professor has an idea why viruses spread so quickly on college campuses: Students know how to practice good hygiene but simply don't.

Ben Chapman, an assistant professor of family and consumer services, recently published a study on a norovirus outbreak at the University of Guelth in Canada. He found that 83 percent of students who ate in a campus dining hall said they followed posted hygiene recommendations, but only 17 percent actually did so.

And part of the reason is the communication campaigns conducted by health agencies, which commonly use phrases like "self-isolate" and "gastrointestinal illness."

If you're talking to a college student, Chapman argues, just tell them they'll puke if they don't wash their hands.

"A lot of the stuff that is out there is motherly and generic," he said. "We have to target students differently than we need to target parents of little kids."

**Related Content**

- Read our 2006 report on the state's preparation for a flu pandemic
- Go to the CDC's information page on swine flu

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Swine flu vaccine approved; available next month

BY LAURAN NEERGAARD, The Associated Press

WASHINGTON - The Food and Drug Administration approved the new swine flu vaccine Tuesday, a long-anticipated step as the government works to start mass vaccinations next month.

Limited supplies should start trickling out the first week of October -- about a week earlier than expected, Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius told Congress. Then about 45 million doses should arrive around Oct. 15, followed by more shipments each week.

She said they'll be available at up to 90,000 sites, including schools and clinics, across the U.S.

Eventually, "we will have enough vaccine available for everyone," Sebelius said.

The government has ordered 195 million doses but may order more if there's enough demand, she said. Typically, fewer than 100 million Americans seek flu vaccine every year, and it's unclear whether swine flu -- which scientists prefer to call the 2009 H1N1 strain -- will prompt much more demand. A recent Associated Press-GfK poll found that 57 percent of people said they were likely to get it.

This year, many people will have to line up twice for flu vaccine, once to be inoculated against regular winter flu and a second time for an H1N1 vaccination.

The swine flu seems no more deadly than regular winter flu, which every year kills 36,000 Americans and hospitalizes 200,000.

But there's an important difference: This H1N1 strain sickens younger people more frequently than the people over 65 who are the main victims of seasonal flu.

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Downtown shooting suspect indicted

The Daily Reflector

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A grand jury has issued two first-degree murder indictments against a man suspected in a June 30 drive-by shooting in downtown Greenville.

The Pitt County jury handed down the indictments against James Richardson after deliberations on Monday. The paperwork was made available on Tuesday.

Pitt County District Attorney Clark Everett was out of the office Tuesday and unavailable for comment. He has not said whether he would seek the death penalty in the case. First-degree indictments would allow a death penalty prosecution.

Richardson, 32, is suspected in the shooting deaths of East Carolina student Landon Blackley and restaurant manager Drew Kirby about 2 a.m. outside the Other Place night club.

He turned himself in to police on July 4 and was charged with open counts of murder. Police have said he is the lone suspect in the crime, allegedly firing multiple shots at the club from a white BMW.

Police reviewed video tape from surveillance cameras that monitor the Fifth Street area where the shooting occurred. Police have said the cameras did not capture the incident.

Officers issued warrants for Richardson a day after the shooting and offered a $10,000 reward for information leading to an arrest.

Richardson was a standout athlete at J.H. Rose High School who played basketball for teams in Europe and the NBA's developmental league. He turned himself over to police at his mother's house.

Attempts by The Daily Reflector to interview Richardson and his mother have been unsuccessful.

Richardson said in an August interview with a local radio station that he did not shoot Kirby and Blackley.

Richardson remained in jail Tuesday awaiting his next scheduled court appearance on Sept. 30.
City asking for input on crime issues downtown

By Kathryn Kennedy
The Daily Reflector

Tuesday, September 15, 2009

Bar owners and managers will be asked for input this afternoon on a series of proposed ordinances aimed at reducing crime downtown.

Three ordinances and an agreement with the Alcohol Beverage Control (ABC) Board were selected for further consideration by the Greenville City Council at an Aug. 24 public hearing on crime. They were chosen from a list of 15 potential actions provided for consideration that night and will affect public and private clubs across the city.

City Attorney Dave Holec said today's 4:30 p.m. meeting at City Hall already was scheduled as an update for downtown club and business owners following the June 30 drive-by shooting that killed two men. City Manager Wayne Bowers and Greenville Police Department Chief William Anderson will give an update on security and lighting changes downtown before Holec presents the potential actions for input.

The following ordinances were drafted at the request of city council members and will be discussed this afternoon:

Any public or private club using amplified audio entertainment or live entertainment between 11 p.m. and the close of business any day will provide off-duty law enforcement or uniformed, licensed security guards.

Downtown clubs with occupancy between 50 and 300 persons must hire at least one law enforcement officer or guard. Those with an occupancy of more than 300 persons must hire two.

A public or private club outside of downtown but within 500 feet of a residential zoning district and with an occupancy of 50 to 200 persons must employ at least one officer or guard to patrol the parking lot. A club within 500 feet of a residential zoning district with occupancy of more than 200 persons must hire two to patrol the parking lot.

No public or private club can employ a bouncer who has been convicted of a crime including the sale, manufacture, distribution or possession of a controlled substance, a criminal street gang activity, prostitution or assignation; homicide, assault, affray, communicating threats, unlawful possession of firearms or discharge of those weapons.

The club can hire someone if more than two years have elapsed since conviction of a misdemeanor offense or the date of release from confinement (whichever is the later date). Also eligible is someone convicted of a felony, or two or more misdemeanor offenses, after more than five years have passed.

The ordinance will be enforced by requiring club owners or managers to submit to the police department lists of any people newly employed as bouncers on a monthly basis and a criminal record check based on fingerprints annually thereafter.

No public or private club located in any district shall be located within a 500-foot radius of an existing or approved public or private club as measured from the nearest lot line. Existing clubs can continue to operate. An establishment must close for 180 consecutive days with no intent to reestablish the business in order for the property to cease being a club.

An agreement with ABC Law Enforcement would allow Greenville police officers to assist in enforcing the state alcoholic beverage laws.

Contact Kathryn Kennedy at k kennedy@coxnc.com or (252) 329-9566.
Popular recycling program sparks students’ enthusiasm

By Brock Letchworth
The Daily Reflector

Tuesday, September 15, 2009

A popular recycling program in Pitt County schools is kicking off another year this week with additional resources and more schools participating.

In its third year, the Feed The Bin program is designed to educate students about recycling and give them hands-on experience with it throughout the school day, organizers say.

Participating schools are provided recycle bins for each classroom and office, roll carts and promotional materials to motivate students to recycle. Local recycling agencies provide the pick-ups free of charge. The grant-funded program is organized through a collaborative effort of the Keep Greenville Beautiful organization, East Carolina Vocational Center, Pitt County Solid Waste and Recycling, the City of Greenville, East Carolina University Recycling and Waste Industries.

There will be 12 schools participating in this year’s program, up from three in its first year, said Susan Daughtry, ECVC marketing director. Each will receive a visit in the next two weeks from Recycle Sam, a mascot designed to spark student enthusiasm.

“We are doing these kick-off events to get the kids excited,” Daughtry said. “This program is great because it teaches kids a lot about responsibility not only with recycling, but a lot of times the kids step up and help do things with the program.”

Some schools will hold competitions between classrooms, including a magazine and phone book collection during the first couple of weeks. Schools that are participating are A.G. Cox and C.M. Eppes middle schools; Creekside, Eastern, Elmhurst, Ridgewood, Sadie Sautter, South Greenville, Wahl-Coates and W.H. Robinson elementary schools; South Central High School and St. Peter’s Catholic School.

Daughtry said the program’s popularity has resulted in more resources to support it, including a group of radiologists from Pitt County Memorial Hospital who have volunteered to work at the kick-off events.

“This has been kind of cool because we have never had this much outside help,” Daughtry said. “Most of the schools have somebody working there who steps forward and helps make sure that the right things are being recycled and roll carts get by the curb and things like that. You have to have help to make this work and it is great to see people believe in it and are willing to give us that help.”

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Rethinking the Freshman 15
In an effort to fight obesity, colleges may also trigger disordered eating.

By Johannah Cornblatt | Newsweek Web Exclusive
Sep 15, 2009

Haley Hogan, a recent Yale graduate who has suffered from anorexia, got used to seeing nutrition facts displayed at New York chain restaurants when she took a semester off last fall. But when she returned to Yale in the spring, she was shocked to find cards detailing calorie information all over her residential dining hall. "They're very triggering if you're in recovery from an eating disorder," Hogan says of calorie counts. "I felt almost violated that Yale had done this."

With more than 30 percent of college students falling into the American College Health Association's obese or overweight categories, Yale is not the only school trying to help students make smart food choices. But experts say the emphasis on calorie counts can backfire and lead to disordered eating, even among students with no history of food issues.

Dr. Richard Kreipe, a specialist in adolescent medicine whose research centers on eating disorders, says that while he has seen fewer cases of classic eating disorders like restrictive anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa in the past several years, the number of patients with eating disorders not otherwise specified (EDNOS) has "almost doubled" nationally in the midst of America's obesity epidemic. (An EDNOS, also called disordered eating, is an eating disorder that doesn't meet the strict diagnostic criteria for a full-blown eating disorder, but may include drastic weight loss, caloric restriction, binging, and purging.) Since 2000, the number of college students dieting, vomiting, or taking laxatives to lose weight has jumped from about 28 to 38 percent, according to the American College Health Association's annual surveys. Well-balanced caloric intake, with regular meals and physical activity—not dieting—is the best way to avoid obesity, says Kreipe, a professor at the University of Rochester Medical Center. That's why, in his view, calorie information doesn't benefit students. "Nutrition is not a simple thing that can be distilled down into a label," he says. "There's a tendency for people to overinterpret what a specific number means."

Last fall, Harvard removed cards with calorie information from dining halls. Writing about the decision on his blog, Ted Mayer, executive director of Harvard's dining services, noted that his staff needed to address "the challenge a quiet and surprisingly large contingent of our community faces with eating disorders." The dining staff now makes the information available on the Internet and at kiosks in the dining halls.
Going away to college makes all students vulnerable to weight gain and disordered eating, often at the same time. Students tend to experience a loss of structure when they go from high school to college. Studies have found that college students are less likely to eat breakfast or regular meals, and snack foods account for many often-unrecognized calories. All-you-can-eat dining halls and easy access to alcohol also make college students more susceptible to weight gain. At the same time, anxiety about gaining the "freshman 15" can trigger disordered eating—often well beyond the freshman year. Kreipe says that in a new setting surrounded by new people, college students are more likely to develop body-image issues, which can also lead to disordered eating.

Even overweight students, the prime targets of obesity-awareness programs, may get the wrong message. In a recent study, Dianne Neumark-Sztainer, a professor at the University of Minnesota School of Public Health, found that about 40 percent of overweight college-age women and roughly 20 percent of overweight college-age men engaged in disordered eating behaviors in an attempt to get thin. "People are concerned about the fat kids being fat and the thin kids having anorexia," she says. "But people aren't concerned about the disordered eating among the overweight kids." For under- and overweight people alike, eating disorders can lead to a host of health issues, including electrolyte imbalances, fertility problems, impaired brain development, bone loss, and, in severe cases, death. The study also showed that disordered eating behavior leads to further weight gain over time.

Colleges that focus solely on calorie counts are over-simplifying nutrition, says Neumark-Sztainer, who encourages collaboration between the eating disorder and obesity fields. More comprehensive information—like a nutrient density score—would better serve students. Such data would distinguish between items like a Coke, which is high in calories but low in nutrients, and avocado, which is rich in both calories and nutrients. Neumark-Sztainer says the focus at college should be less on what people eat then how they eat. For example, students who eat with others are more likely to make healthy food choices and less likely to develop disordered eating—either eating too much or too little—than those who eat alone, she says.

There are other ways that schools can help students avoid unhealthy weight gain without provoking eating disorders. Colleges should provide opportunities for healthy physical activity that don't necessarily involve being on a sports team or going to the gym, Kreipe says. For example, schools might create walking trails or organize activities and social groups that focus on physically activity. Kreipe also recommends that schools make more healthy options—both in dining halls and vending machines—available. Above all, he says, colleges should be emphasizing portion size.

Some schools have tried to do just that. Last fall, Penn State converted one of its all-you-can-eat dining halls into a so-called "healthy dining hall," free from French fries, deep-fried chicken, or white bread. For each meal, Penn State's healthy dining hall features a model-portion plate, which consists of 50 percent fruits and vegetables, 25 percent grains, and 25 percent proteins. (The program is modeled on one at the University of North Texas.)

Still, Penn State provides caloric breakdowns in its healthy dining hall and in all other cafeterias on campus. "Healthy entrees," designated as those that container fewer than 400 calories and 10 grams of fat, are identified by a special check on the cards. Lisa Wandel, Penn State’s residential-dining director, says it’s the college's responsibility to notify students about what's in their food. "Would you pull labels off all the items in a grocery store?" she says. "We can't hide the fact that food has calories. I think it's better to provide that
information so students can make educated choices."

Despite objections from students like Haley Hogan, Yale also plans to continue posting calorie counts in its dining halls this year. Rafi Taherian, executive director of Yale dining, says he expects that students will one day have access to real-time information about food through their cell phones or laptops. "I don't think we can hold the information back from them," he says. In fact, Rafi predicts that colleges, like some states and cities, will soon be required to provide students with nutritional data.

More important, it seems, is giving students the context to understand that information and making sure their education focuses on healthy behavior, not numbers on a scale.

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Floyd, plus 10

Hurricane Floyd's flood waters devastated parts of Eastern North Carolina. Scars remain.

There are stories, so many stories, from those days 10 years ago, when a hurricane named Floyd made landfall in North Carolina. It was not so much the wind, but the rain, and the rain and the rain. Tropical Storm Dennis had hit the state two weeks before, and the ground was still soaked. When Floyd came ashore on Sept. 16, the last thing people from Wilmington to Kinston to Rocky Mount needed was more water. But they got it -- two feet of rain in some places, lesser but excessive amounts in many others.

When it was over, there was a breathtaking $6 billion in damage. Some 52 people were dead, most drowned, many washed away in cars. The town of Princeville, on the Tar River east of Rocky Mount, had at the time about 2,000 residents and laid claim to being the oldest town in America chartered by black residents. Floyd's floods virtually wiped it out. In Kinston, neighborhoods near the Neuse River met the same fate. Seven Springs, a few miles west of Kinston along the Neuse, had 170 people in it then; its population remains half of what it was.

And all over the swath of the eastern part of the state hit hardest by flood waters, there are sad, sad stories of lost family members. The News & Observer's Martha Quillin wrote of one from Swansboro, the historic town at the mouth of the White Oak River not far from Camp Lejeune. Today, Mary Carole and Wesley Mobley still grieve for their son, Paul, and their granddaughter, Emily, who were swept away by flooding.

Thanks to various forms of public help, some communities have recuperated, and others have acted to see that another massive flood would not find as many people vulnerable. (Kinston, for example, got the word to homeowners that federal emergency money and some from the state would help people buy homes outside the floodplain, and the city saw to it that the sites of homes ravaged by flooding would not be used again.) Princeville's population is even a little above pre-flood numbers. But other, smaller places just aren't coming back, a fact that remaining residents calmly accept.

And here's a toast to the human spirit. The overall recovery, the attitude that people have taken about it, the determination they have brought to it, have been something of a triumph. That the people of the state, many of whom have seen more than one natural disaster (albeit not on the scale of Floyd's floods), could stay strong and put their determination to labors both spiritual and physical is inspiring but not surprising.

The ominous winds of 10 years ago and the rains and floods that followed them were terrifying indeed, but lessons were learned in terms of mapping flood plains and disaster preparedness that will stand the state in good stead. And other lessons were reaffirmed. Said one Seven Springs resident: "We realized how good people are."