



SWINE FLU STUDY

Chemical Pathology Laboratories... Please can you help?

The Health Protection Agency (HPA) is undertaking national surveillance to estimate the baseline immunity to the swine flu virus (H1N1v) and the incidence of infection as the pandemic progresses during the coming months. Sero-surveys will be performed using samples taken before the pandemic and then monthly from August 2009 to May 2010. This data is essential for understanding the current and future epidemiology of H1N1v and for informing how best to use the vaccine when it becomes available later this year.

We have serum samples taken prior to the pandemic from our sero-epidemiology unit (SEU) sample archive. These are collected regularly from collaborating HPA and NHS microbiology laboratories and stored at the HPA Regional Laboratory in Manchester. However, it is planned to test ~1000 serum samples across the age range each month to track how immunity is changing by age in the population and so provide incidence estimates. For this, we would like to source sera from chemical pathology laboratories across all English regions as such sera are only retained for a short time after testing. Their use would ensure a timely turnaround time and avoid the potential bias in using samples submitted to microbiology laboratories. Your participation and assistance in this project would be much appreciated.

Serum requirements:

From each laboratory/region - up to 25 serum samples per month for each of the following age groups, distributed evenly between male and female patients: < 5 years; 5 – 14 years; 15 – 44 years; 45 – 64 years and 65 + years.

A minimum volume of 200µL is requested for each serum sample.

The following demographic data are also required for each sample: gender, unique sample identifier (for example, lab number), date of birth (or age, if DOB not available) and date sample collected.

Reimbursement

This study has been funded by the National Institute for Health Research, under a Health Technology Assessment call. The grant has provision for payment of collecting laboratories for their time in identifying and documenting samples, aliquoting and despatch to Manchester. Provision for payment of £4 per sample has been made.

Ethics approval

The HPA has ethics approval for the unlinked anonymous testing of serum samples for public health monitoring purposes

If you can assist and would like to participate, or require further information, please contact Professor Elizabeth Miller (liz.miller@hpa.org.uk) or Elaine Stanford (elaine.stanford@hpa.org.uk).