



Written by [Steven J. DuBord](#) on October 7, 2009

Normal Flu Shot May Counter H1N1

Researchers in Mexico have gathered evidence that the normal flu vaccine offers some degree of protection versus the H1N1 swine flu, Reuters reported on October 6.

This is different from most studies, which tend to show that the standard flu vaccine is largely ineffective against H1N1. A Canadian study even suggested that those who receive a seasonal flu vaccine could be more susceptible to H1N1, but the World Health Organization and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are skeptical of those results.



Lourdes Garcia-Garcia and colleagues at the National Institute of Public Health in Cuernavaca, Mexico, published their findings in the *British Medical Journal* with a slight disclaimer: “These results are to be considered cautiously and in no way indicate that seasonal vaccine should replace vaccination against pandemic influenza A/H1N1 2009,”

Rather, the team hopes their research will encourage people to receive the seasonal vaccine while the H1N1-specific shots are still in short supply.

The researchers’ optimism comes from their study of 60 patients with confirmed H1N1 flu and 180 similar patients with other diseases. Only eight of the patients who had received a vaccination for seasonal flu became infected with the H1N1 virus.

Regarding the patients studied, 29 percent of those who were not vaccinated ended up contracting H1N1, while only 13 percent of those who received a seasonal vaccination caught swine flu. Additionally, 35 percent of H1N1 cases ending in death involved people who had not been vaccinated, but there were no deaths among those who had been vaccinated.

The team thus concluded that “seasonal vaccination might protect against the most severe forms of the disease.”

Menno de Jong of the University of Amsterdam and Rogier Sanders of New York’s Cornell University agree that the study shows a positive effect, but they would really like to see a universal flu vaccine to inoculate against all strains at the same time.

Their dream is not a reality yet. Seasonal vaccines are reformulated every year to deal with influenza virus mutations, while new virus strains must be met with totally new vaccines. H1N1 swine flu is one of these new strains, and it has taken five months to formulate and manufacture a vaccine against it.

One must wonder if the time and expense required to concoct an H1N1 vaccine is really worth it, since the Mexican study shows that even a seasonal flu shot can be beneficial. Side effects of the new vaccine must also be considered, though this would be necessary for any inoculation.

In any case, the decision to vaccinate should be an individual one, not compulsory. The choice should be left in the hands of mature adults and parents, not government bureaucrats.



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