# H1N1 Pandemic News Notes

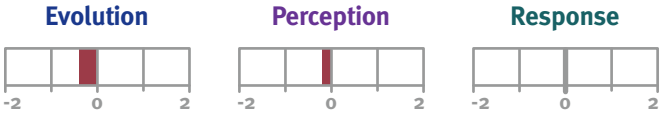
bio-era

*Tuesday, June 23, 2009*

## H1N1 Trend Update

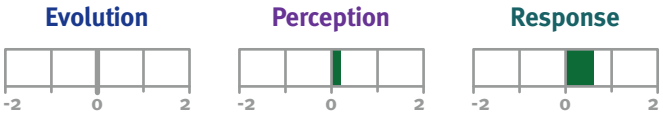
Today, Latvia confirmed its first case of the H1N1 virus in a passenger returning from the U.S. and Canada.[1] Latvia is the second Baltic nation to confirm a case of the H1N1 virus. Estonia confirmed its first case on May 29th, in a man who recently returned from the U.S.[2] As of June 22nd, Estonia has confirmed five cases of the H1N1 virus, only two of which are confirmed in-country transmissions.[3] Yesterday, Tunisia also reported its first cases of the H1N1 virus in two citizens returning from the U.S.[4]

Bio-era will continue to monitor reports of H1N1 cases arising outside of the US that are ascribed to contact with US citizens. If this trend continues, it could have significant effects on perceptions and attitudes toward US citizens traveling abroad.




## Singapore Modifies its H1N1 Strategy

Singapore's Health Minister announced today that it is changing its alert level to Yellow Mitigation and shifting from a containment phase to a community-spread phase. The government will now focus its resources on detection and treatment of the virus, with greater focus on high-risk cases. Schools will open again in July, and events such as the Asian Youth Games and the F1 Race will not be canceled.[5] Singapore has confirmed 168 cases of the virus and the Health Minister acknowledged that the spread of the virus is inevitable as the country has reached a point where local transmissions can be expected to grow rapidly.[6]

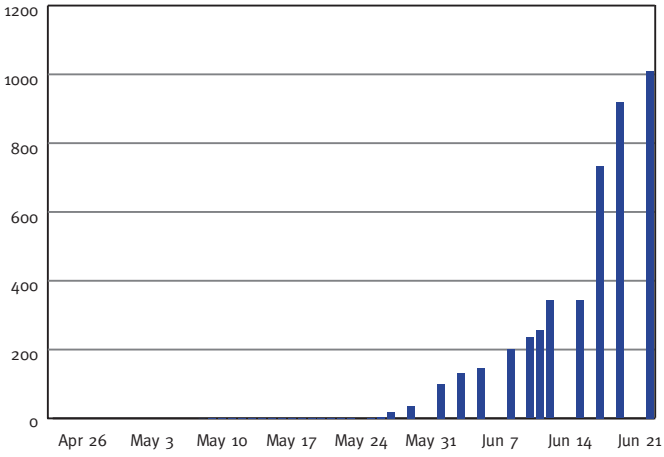



## Buenos Aires Hospitals Suspending Surgeries

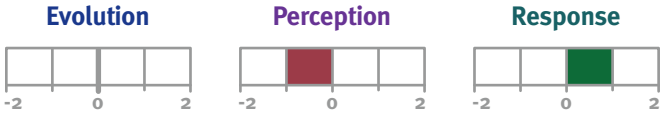
Argentina's Health Ministry announced today that 32 hospitals in the city of Buenos Aires will be suspending non-urgent surgeries for an indefinite period of time. This decision will give patients with confirmed or suspected flu-like symptoms priority in the hospitals. The Health Ministry last week cited maximum capacity of hospital beds and newborn intensive-care rooms as the reason for this decision. The Ministry also recommended that citizens of the city refrain from traveling to other regions of the country.[7]

The Argentine Crisis Committee is also expected today to announce new measures for dealing with the H1N1 virus. Officials are planning to put senior medical school students and retired doctors to work in an effort to ease pressures on the medical infrastructure in Buenos Aires from the enormous influx of patients entering hospitals and H1N1 clinics.[8]

**Cumulative Confirmed H1N1 Cases in Argentina**




*Source: WHO (2009)*[9]



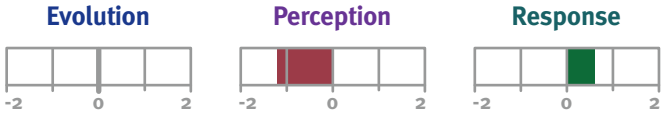

## Australia Warns Aborigines

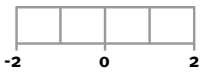
Today, Australian Heath officials released a statement warning that Aborigines may be at high risk from the H1N1 virus. This comes after the first Australian H1N1-related death was confirmed in a 26 year-old Aboriginal man Friday. The number of confirmed H1N1 cases also doubled to 61 this past week in Australia's Northern Territory, where about one-third of the population is Aboriginal. Australia has approximately 520,000 Aborigines that make up about 2.5% of the population.

The Health Minister explained the reason for the warning, stating "We know many of the chronic diseases that they suffer from are indicators that swine flu may actually hit them harder than some others in the community."[10]

Similar warnings and concerns have also mounted in Canada's Northern indigenous communities, such as Nunavut and Manitoba, where Inuit and First Nation communities have seen outbreaks of the H1N1 virus. These indigenous communities also suffer from chronic diseases and poverty, which officials have indicated makes them particularly vulnerable to the virus.[11]

Australia has already sent doctors and medical supplies to remote aboriginal communities. Yesterday doctors flew to Kiwirrkurra to set up a small clinic and were immediately swamped by people looking for answers about the H1N1 virus. Kiwirrkurra is the aboriginal community where the victim of Australia's first swine flu death resided. The fear level in the community has turned the H1N1 virus into a very sensitive subject, and Northern Territory officials are not releasing specific locations of confirmed cases in order to minimize local concerns. As one aboriginal resident stated, "We heard all about this swine flu on the news, and suddenly all this mob was frightened."[12]




Bio-era's judgement regarding the extent to which a development is positive or negative for: (1) the physical evolution of the disease, (2) perceptions of the disease, and (3) future disease event impacts.

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|---|---|---|---|
| **Physical Evolution**<br>How significant is the development with respect to the evolution, transmissability, and virulence of the disease? | Indicates or portends higher transmission, transmissability, and/or virulence of the disease | No Net Change | Indicates or portends lower transmission, transmissability, and/or virulence of the disease |
| **Perception**<br>How significant is the development with respect to perceptions of threat (i.e., fears of the disease)? | Indicates or promotes heightened fear of the disease | No Net Effect | Indicates or promotes lower fear of the disease |
| **Response/Reaction**<br>To what degree does the response help or hinder the effort to mitigate the impacts the disease? | Expected to exacerbate disease impacts | No Net Impact | Expected to mitigate disease impacts |

1 *Baltic Times.* "Latvia Hit With Swine Flu." June 23, 2009. See: http://www.baltictimes.com/news/articles/23103/
2 Reuters. "Estonia Reports First Confirmed H1N1 Case." May 29, 2009. See: http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/LT269861.htm
3 ECDC. June 23, 2009. See: http://ecdc.europa.eu/en/Health_topics/novel_influenza_virus/2009_Outbreak/Outbreak_new_table.aspx
4 Reuters. "Tunisia Reports First Cases of H1N1flu." June 22, 2009. See: http://www.reuters.com/article/GCA-SwineFlu/idUSTRE55L5NJ20090622
5 Asia One News. "Singapore Changes H1N1 Strategy." June 23, 2009. See: http://health.asiaone.com/Health/News/Story/A1Story20090623-150344.html
6 WHO. "Amid Spread, Singapore Changes Tack on Pandemic Influenza." June 23, 2009. See: http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/JBRN-7TAGY3?OpenDocument
7 Momento 24. "In Buenos Aires and Province, Hospitals Postpone Surgeries." June 23, 2009.See: http://momento24.com/en/2009/06/23/swine-flu-in-buenos-aires-city-and-province-hospitals-postpone-surgeries/
8 *Buenos Aires Herald.* "Seventh H1N1 Death in Chile." June 23, 2009. See: http://www.buenosairesherald.com/BreakingNews/View/4655
9 WHO. "Situation Updates." June 23, 2009. See: http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/updates/en/index.html
10 AFP. "Australia Warns Aborigines at High Swine Flu Risk," June 23, 2009. See: http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5hf-4Z5exL_AUeucct-c5NpQqyXzA
11 *Bio-era Pandemic News Notes* June 16, 2009. See: http://bio-era.net/activities/news/pandemic_news_061609.pdf
12 *The Australian.* "Swine Flu Goes from Mexico to Middle of Nowhere." June 24, 2009. See: http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,25681969-23289,00.html