



H1N1 Pandemic May Have Peaked in October in U.S., According to Quest Diagnostics

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Quest Diagnostics Health Trends(TM) Report based on results of more than 142,000 patient specimens tested for 2009 H1N1 influenza virus since May 2009

MADISON, N.J., Nov. 20 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ -- Rates of infection by the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus may have peaked in late October, but the pandemic flu virus continues to be a potential source of illness in all age groups, including the elderly, according to a new report by Quest Diagnostics Incorporated (NYSE: DGX), the world's leading provider of diagnostic testing, information and services.

In its most recent Quest Diagnostics Health Trends(TM) Report "Testing for H1N1 in America," Quest Diagnostics analyzed results of more than 142,000 de-identified patient specimens tested for the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus in the U.S. between May 11, 2009, when the company introduced its first test for detecting the pandemic virus to physicians, and November 10, 2009. Quest Diagnostics is the only company in the U.S. that both performs 2009 H1N1 laboratory testing and, through its Focus Diagnostics business, provides two commercial 2009 H1N1 flu virus test kits authorized by the FDA for emergency use by complex molecular labs.

Key findings from the report:

- In the weeks following October 27, test demand for the virus has declined after several weeks of strong growth.
- About 99 percent of positive influenza A specimens tested were positive for 2009 H1N1 influenza.
- The number of specimens that tested positive for 2009 H1N1 influenza dropped in all age groups since late October, with the exception of those 65 years of age and older. In this age group, rates of positivity have tripled since late August, and are now at about 14 percent.
- Rates of positive test results for the pandemic have declined in recent weeks in most regions, with the exception of the Northeast, where rates have more than doubled during the two weeks ending November 10 compared to approximately the last two weeks of October.

"Our data provides encouraging signs that the 2009 H1N1 pandemic virus isn't spreading as aggressively now as it did in September and most of October. This decline may be due to several factors, including infection of millions of Americans with this influenza virus and the impact of H1N1 vaccinations, which may have reduced the number of people susceptible to infection, and changes in physician test-ordering practices," said Jay M. Lieberman, M.D., medical director, infectious diseases, Quest Diagnostics. "Nonetheless, our data also clearly indicates that the 2009 H1N1 virus continues to be the predominant influenza strain in the U.S. The bottom line is that the 2009 H1N1 flu pandemic in America is far from over."

To read the full report, please visit QuestDiagnostics.com/HealthTrends.

The company's 2009 H1N1 influenza virus tests employ real-time reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) to qualitatively detect the 2009 H1N1 flu virus in a patient's nasal or nasopharyngeal specimens. The test targets a region of the hemagglutinin gene of the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus specifically to detect the presence of 2009 H1N1 influenza RNA, thereby differentiating it from seasonal human influenza A viruses.

Quest Diagnostics' Focus Diagnostics business has a track record of being first to market with new laboratory testing services for emerging infectious diseases. The company introduced a 2009 H1N1 flu test approximately two weeks after the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services declared a pandemic emergency in the U.S. in late April. In addition, the FDA has issued emergency use authorizations to Focus Diagnostics for 2009 H1N1 influenza virus tests that the company provides commercially as test kits to complex molecular labs. These test kits include the new Simplexa-branded test kit on the 3M Integrated Cycler from 3M. Earlier this week, the company announced that the Simplexa 2009 H1N1 influenza virus test is now available in 35 countries in Europe as well as the U.S.

For more information about Quest Diagnostics and influenza testing options, please visit www.QuestDiagnostics.com/2009H1N1 or www.FocusDx.com/2009H1N1.

About the FDA's Emergency Use Authorization

The Focus Diagnostics' 2009 H1N1 influenza virus tests have not been FDA cleared or approved. These tests have been authorized by FDA under an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA). These H1N1 tests are only authorized for the duration of the declaration of emergency under section 564(b)(1) of the Act, 21 U.S.C. section 360bbb-3(b)(1). The declaration of emergency will expire on April 26, 2010, unless it is terminated or revoked sooner or renewed.

About Quest Diagnostics

Quest Diagnostics is the world's leading provider of diagnostic testing, information and services that patients and doctors need to make better healthcare decisions. The company offers the broadest access to diagnostic testing services through its network of laboratories and patient service centers, and provides interpretive consultation through its extensive medical and scientific staff. Quest Diagnostics is a pioneer in developing innovative diagnostic tests and advanced healthcare information technology solutions that help improve patient care. Additional company information is available at www.QuestDiagnostics.com.

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