Seasonal Flu verses Pandemic Flu

Seasonal Flu

- Outbreaks follow predictable seasonal patterns; occur annually, usually in the winter, in temperate climates.
- Usually some immunity built up from previous exposure
- Healthy adults usually not at risk for serious complications; the very young, the elderly and those with certain underlying health conditions at increased risk for serious complications.
- Health systems can usually meet public and patient needs.
- Vaccine developed based on known flu strains and available for annual flu season.
- Adequate supplies of antivirals are usually available.
- Average U.S. deaths approximately 36,000/yr
- Symptoms: fever, cough, runny nose, muscle pain. Deaths often caused by complications, such as pneumonia.
- Generally causes modest impact on society (e.g., some school closing, encouragement of people who are sick to stay home)
- Manageable impact on domestic and world economy.

Pandemic Flu

- Occurs rarely (three times in the 20th century-last in 1968)
- No previous exposure; little or no pre-existing immunity.
- Healthy people may be at increased risk for serious complications
- Health systems may be overwhelmed
- Vaccine probably would not be available in the early stages of a pandemic
- Effective antivirals may be in limited supply
- Number of deaths could be quite high (e.g., U.S. 1918 death toll approximately 500,000)
- Symptoms may be more severe and complications more frequent
- May cause major impact on society (e.g., widespread restrictions on travel, closing of schools and businesses, cancellation of large public gatherings)
- Potential for severe impact on domestic and world economy.