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October 5, 2009
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

First Death Due to H1N1 Influenza In Santa Barbara County

The Santa Barbara County Public Health Department reports that a female adolescent who was hospitalized with influenza in Santa Barbara County died on Saturday, October 3, 2009. This adolescent had underlying chronic medical conditions prior to hospitalization.

“We are deeply saddened with the knowledge that a family has lost a child”, said Michele Mickiewicz, Interim Director for the Public Health Department. “We recognize that any death is a loss, but there is a special level of empathy for a family when it is a child.”

The Public Health Department will maintain the confidentiality of the child and the family.

This female adolescent was transferred to Cottage Hospital on September 18, 2009 from another local hospital. At admission, her symptoms included a fever, cough, shortness of breath, and seizures. The adolescent developed pneumonia and sepsis (a blood infection), prior to her death on Saturday.

The Public Health Laboratory tested a specimen from this adolescent and confirmed influenza A infection. It is classified as a probable H1N1 case and will be confirmed through testing at the State Public Health Laboratory.

Influenza is generally a mild illness for healthy people. However, individuals with chronic medical conditions and pregnant women are at a higher risk for complications and increased severity of the illness. The Public Health Department urges individuals to take steps to protect themselves and prevent the spread of illness. In addition, individuals with chronic health problems or pregnancy who develop signs of the flu (fever and cough) should contact their healthcare providers for advice and follow-up immediately.

For more information about H1N1 influenza, see www.sbcfluinfo.org or call the H1N1 flu information line at 1-888-722-6358.

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