


THE SCOTSMAN

Wed 29 Sep 2004

Victim 'caught bird flu from daughter'

NOPPORN WONG-ANAN IN BANGKOK

A THAI woman who died of bird flu probably caught it from her daughter in the first case of the deadly disease spreading from human to human, the government confirmed yesterday.

The 26-year-old woman, Pranee Thongchan, who died on 20 September, probably caught the bird flu virus from her 11-year-old daughter while looking after her in hospital, officials said.

"It would have been due to close and prolonged face-to-face exposure," the government statement said, adding that no health workers at the hospital had fallen ill.

The mother's death took to ten the number of Thais killed by the H5N1 virus. In Vietnam, 20 people have died of the disease. All but one of those have died after being infected by birds.

But experts fear that the virus could eventually mutate into a form that can be easily spread between humans, creating a deadly pandemic like the one in 1918, which killed 20 million people.

Experts said the new case did not suggest such a mutation had occurred, however.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) and the US Centre for Disease Control and Prevention had been part of the investigation of the case from the beginning and agreed it "would not pose a significant public health risk", the statement said.

The H5N1 virus would have to go through an animal - most likely a pig, although cats can also get it - capable of harbouring the human influenza virus with which it could merge to forge a virus that could trigger a pandemic. The experts agreed "there is no evidence to suggest that the virus has mutated", the statement said.

"This could be just a dead end," Dick Thompson, a WHO spokesman, said in Geneva. "That's what it looks like now. But we really need to finish the studies we have ongoing. We'll know more this week,"

The Thai prime minister, Thaksin Shinawatra, called an emergency meeting for today of provincial governors to beef up measures against the disease, a government spokesman said.

Scott Dowell, of the US Centre for Disease Control, said the Thai case was a "fluke" in that the mother and daughter lived apart, whereas in families living under the same roof it was impossible to tell if infected people caught bird flu from chickens or from each other.



Suspicious of people-to-people transmission in Hong Kong in 1997, when the H5N1 virus first appeared, and in Vietnam this year could not be substantiated for that reason, Mr Dowell said.

"Because the mother lived in a separate city, it was much easier to be confident that the likely mode of transmission or the probable mode of transmission was person-to-person.

"What appears to have happened so far is a well-documented episode of transmission in a family cluster after prolonged, close contacts. It doesn't necessarily tell us that anything has changed about the virus and about the way it transmitted."

The daughter died on 8 September in the north-central province of Khampaeng Phet. Her mother, who worked away, had gone to the province on learning the girl was ill.

The mother went back to work and died soon after. Her aunt, Pranom Thongchan, with whom the girl lived while her mother was away, was confirmed on Monday to have the H5N1 virus, but was said to be recovering.

The girl and the aunt both had contact with infected chickens in the village. Charal Trinvuthipong, the head of the department of disease control, said fowl were still dying when he visited the village at the weekend.

Web links

- [Dept of Health - pandemic flu](http://www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/EmergencyPlanning/PandemicFlu/fs/en)
<http://www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/EmergencyPlanning/PandemicFlu/fs/en>
- [WHO - Bird Flu fact sheet](http://www.who.int/csr/don/2004_01_15/en/)
http://www.who.int/csr/don/2004_01_15/en/

Related topic

- [Bird flu](http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=161)
<http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=161>

This article: <http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=161&id=1137362004>

Last updated: 29-Sep-04 09:59 GMT

Ads by Google

[Protect against bird flu](#)

Vira 38 - Inhibits bird flu virus No prescription needed. 40% savings
www.prbpharmaceuticals.com

[Surgical and P2 Masks](#)

Easy and quick! Supplied direct to home or office.
www.bulkarsolutions.com.au

[Protection From Avian Flu](#)

Surgical face masks approved for reducing exposure to bird flu.
www.survivebirdflu.co.nz
