

Evening News

Tue 18 Oct 2005

Warning not to 'panic buy' bird flu drugs

PEOPLE have been warned against panic buying drugs to protect them against bird flu by the World Health Organisation.

The WHO today stressed Tamiflu could only reduce the effect of the illness, and is not a vaccine to prevent it.

It wants governments to stockpile Tamiflu rather than see members of the public attempt to buy it en masse.

The spread of bird flu across Europe has now seen it reach Greece.

Scientists have warned that a strain of the disease deadly to humans could cause a lethal pandemic if it mutates into a form that can be spread from person to person.

British scientists who have travelled to Asia to inspect the spread of bird flu said the number of cases reported in humans might only be "the tip of the iceberg", despite it already causing 60 deaths.

There have been reports of European pharmacists selling out of Tamiflu as public concern grows.

WHO pandemic alert chief Michael Ryan said: "The WHO at this point does not advise individuals to stockpile this drug for any purpose.

"There is no indication at this stage for anyone to be taking this drug other than the very high-risk groups in areas in which the avian disease has become a problem."

A simulation of a bird flu pandemic is set to be held in the European Union.

Health Secretary Patricia Hewitt said the Government would continue to review its preparations "so that as far as any country can be fully prepared against the risk of pandemic flu, we in the UK will be prepared".

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)

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Last updated: 18-Oct-05 12:23 GMT

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