

No Mercy for Swine!

Swine Flu Epidemic Continues Spreading While World Health Officials Scramble to Contain a Possible Global Pandemic.

*** For the first time in several years a new strain of influenza is able to have a dangerous affect on both the weak and the strong, which has generated a global threat of massive proportions!**

The question on the severity of the new strand of influenza (H1N1) that is commonly known as swine flu is still in question. Although health officials throughout the world are taking great measures to prevent a global outbreak with the alert level possibly being raised from phase 5 to phase 6 by the World Health Organization. According to United Nations Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon during a press conference on 27 April, "It could be mild, in its effects, or potentially be severe. We do not know which way it will go. But we are concerned that, in Mexico, most of those who died were young and healthy adults." Since the Secretary General's quote there has been an increase in swine flu cases in several states in the U.S. as well as an increase in reported cases by nations in Europe, Middle East, Asia and South America.

The flu season is typically at its strongest during the fall and winter seasons so the question is how prepared governments will be after the summer when it will be able to thrive in ideal weather conditions. It all depends on preparation, stockpiling of vaccines and medicines as well as keeping the public calm and well informed. However, people are still prone to overreacting about the potential massive outbreak and the pharmaceutical industry is definitely banking on it. The swine flu epidemic has become mainstreamed as a major global health hazard as even the World Health Organization officials even proclaimed it as a possible threat to humanity since they are still researching the new strand of the virus.

People from all over the world have been raiding their local pharmacies in order to buy Tamiflu, which is an antiviral pill owned by California biotech company, Gilead Sciences. This company has once again reentered the world stage as a primary flu treatment provider after it saw huge profits in sales during the Avian influenza outbreaks (Bird Flue) of 2003-2005, and the 2007 massive restocking by world governments such as the U.S. that would use it for their emergency inventories in case the outbreak deepened (Yahoo Finance). In fact, the U.S. government is already expected to restock the 12 million doses of Tamiflu that was released earlier this month. Gilead is already seeing massive profits worldwide from both the private sector as well as from governments that could ultimately raise its profits to at least \$600 million for both 2009-2010 flu seasons. Although the value of their stock continues to soar as a result of this crisis, the real question to ask is how serious this

pandemic will become at the end of the summer and how prepared we'll actually be when flu season goes into full gear in the fall.