

China's A(H1N1) death count suspect: report

Written by Taipei Times

Friday, 20 November 2009 08:09 - Last Updated Friday, 20 November 2009 08:11

China may have had more A(H1N1) flu deaths than have been reported, with some local governments possibly concealing suspect cases, a prominent Chinese medical expert said in an interview published yesterday.

Zhong Nanshan (钟南山), a doctor based in Guangdong Province, said he doubted the current official death toll from the influenza strain, also called "swine flu," that has medical experts worldwide worried.

"I just don't believe that nationwide there have been in all 53 H1N1 deaths," Zhong told the Southern Metropolis Daily, a popular Guangdong newspaper.

Zhong said that "some areas have not been testing deaths from severe [pneumonia] and treating them as cases of ordinary pneumonia without a question," the paper reported.

Zhong is respected by many people in China for his candor and work in fighting SARS in 2003, when nationwide panic and international alarm erupted after it emerged that officials hid or underplayed the spreading epidemic.

China has reported 28 new A(H1N1) deaths in the last week during a cold snap across much of the country, the Ministry of Health said on its Web site (www.moh.gov.cn).

The latest national death tally issued on Monday on the same Web site showed 53 death cases.

The A(H1N1) flu strain affects the respiratory tract and patients who become severely ill or die typically suffer from pneumonia, which is brought on either directly by the virus or because of secondary bacterial infections owing to the person's weakened immune system.

"It's irresponsible to treat these cases as ordinary pneumonia deaths," the newspaper quoted Zhong as saying.

Zhong said Guangdong province was acting responsibly, but the report did not say which areas he had doubts about.

Cover-ups by local governments in 2003 during the SARS epidemic led to the sackings of several officials. More than 300 people died in that outbreak.

The Health Ministry did not have immediate comments on Zhong's remarks.

Zhong said China's peak flu season would start next month and last until February next year in the north of the country, a time when Chinese gather for the Lunar New Year.

China is preparing for possible wider outbreaks. More than 34.8 million people have received free vaccination until Wednesday, the ministry said.

China's A(H1N1) death count suspect: report

Written by Taipei Times

Friday, 20 November 2009 08:09 - Last Updated Friday, 20 November 2009 08:11

Meanwhile, China's health minister said on Wednesday his country was vaccinating 1.5 million people a day against swine flu, part of a mammoth effort to reach nearly 7 percent of inhabitants in the world's most populous country by year's end.

Chen Zhu (陈竺) said that more than 15 million Chinese had been immunized so far.

He also defended China's aggressive quarantine of foreigners with flulike symptoms as well as health detentions of its own citizens.

"With initial efforts of containment, actually we not only reduced the impact of the first wave to China, but we also won time for us to prepare the vaccine" now being given to China's people, Chen said in an interview during the Havana meeting of the Global Forum for Health Research.

Chinese authorities also isolated entire planeloads of international visitors if someone on board experienced flulike symptoms. They pulled passengers off trains and blocked access to villages if someone got sick after coming into contact with a foreigner.

They sparked protests around the world, but when asked if they were successful, Chen said: "Exactly, very successful, exactly."

"We are confident the situation is under control," he said.

Chen said officials have moved past containing swine flu and were focusing on improving emergency room treatment to keep those with the most urgent cases of the virus from dying.

Source: [Taipei Times 2009/11/20](#)