



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

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HAWAI'I TO BE FIRST STATE TO SCREEN INTERNATIONAL TRAVELERS FOR FLU-LIKE ILLNESSES

HONOLULU - Hawai'i will be the first state in the nation to implement a voluntary checkpoint screening process to detect flu-like illness among incoming international travelers at Honolulu International Airport. The program, which will span over a one-year period, was made possible through a cooperative agreement between the Hawai'i State Department of Health (DOH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the amount of \$289,000. DOH will be collaborating with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), CDC, the Hawai'i Department of Transportation, and Hawaiian Airlines for this initiative.

"During SARS other countries screened for flu-like illness at airports," said Director of Health Chiyome Fukino, M.D. "It makes sense for the U.S. to investigate this strategy, given the very real concerns for a potential influenza pandemic. Being a global travel destination, Hawai'i is a good place to start. We hope to share what we learn here with the rest of the nation."

"We would eventually like to screen passengers arriving on one or two international flights per week," said Dr. Sarah Park, Deputy Chief of the DOH Disease Outbreak Control Division.

"Results of the initial screening will be extensively reviewed and fine-tuned before we move forward. Operations may be expanded gradually as CBP transit requirements allow and as personnel gain experience with surveillance procedures."

The screening process for passengers will begin with a questionnaire, which includes basic demographic information, recent travel itinerary, and illness history including the presence or

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absence of fever. Travelers feeling feverish will be asked to voluntarily pass through a checkpoint process. Nurses will check passenger questionnaires for indication of illness. If fever is detected during the screening process, the traveler will enter the routine airport illness surveillance procedure, which includes a voluntary throat swab to test for a flu infection. All information collected will be kept confidential. Passengers without a fever or other symptoms of illness will be directed to the CBP processing area to resume routine entry procedures.

The program builds upon the illness surveillance procedures that the DOH began at the Honolulu International Airport in November 2005, when Hawai'i became the first state in the nation to establish an airport surveillance program for all Honolulu-bound travelers. The program was designed to detect influenza-like illness and help identify infection by new flu virus strains, including avian flu.

Under the current airport surveillance program, pilots routinely notify the Honolulu airport tower if they are arriving with a potentially ill passenger on board. The CDC Quarantine Station is called to meet and evaluate the passenger at the gate. Passengers who have fever and respiratory symptoms are asked to undergo flu testing. The new program is an extension of Hawai'i's influenza sentinel surveillance system that is set up to quickly detect potentially contagious diseases in Hawai'i.

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