

Whereas,

- a) Evidence suggests the possibility in the near term for a global pandemic of influenza A based on recent, highly virulent, human infections with an avian H5N1 virus,
- b) The HHS plan for pandemic influenza recognizes the priority to preserve critical infrastructure in our society,
- c) Ensuring the safety and availability of blood and blood products, including plasma products, is a critical public health need,
- d) Although the scope and impact of the potential pandemic are uncertain, the availability of blood products is likely to be highly compromised during an influenza pandemic,
- e) Data have suggested the possibility that influenza viruses may be present in the blood, organs and tissues of asymptomatic donors
- f) Influenza surveillance data, which come from diverse sources, are limited in scope, timeliness and integration
- g) Risk education and communication to the public, delivered by scientific and medical experts, are essential components of preparedness for pandemic influenza
- h) Preparedness of the blood and plasma systems for pandemic influenza would contribute to the general disaster preparedness

The Committee recommends that the Secretary take immediate steps to:

1. Establish national recognition of the blood and plasma systems (collection, processing, distribution and use) as key elements of the critical infrastructure under the HHS plan, specifically including facility staff, and committed blood and plasma donors
2. Assure full funding of research to resolve critical scientific questions regarding the potential impact of pandemic influenza on blood, organ and tissue safety and availability:
 - a. Foster collaborations with investigators in countries affected by the current H5N1 influenza outbreak to promote studies of possible viremia in asymptomatic persons, including recent case contacts
 - b. Support studies of H5N1 and other potential pandemic strains in suitable animal models, including non-human primates, to investigate viremia and organ localization

- of infectivity in preclinical, clinical, and convalescent stages of disease; transfusion transmissibility of virus if present in blood; and impact of infection and/or drug treatment on the accuracy of donor screening tests
- c. Support studies of influenza viremia during annual outbreaks of non-pandemic strains, including studies on blood and plasma donors, and product recipients
 - d. Support development and validation of quantitative models for blood availability and utilization in an influenza pandemic and the potential value of candidate interventions to prevent shortages
3. Provide targeted federal support to enhance global and domestic surveillance for seasonal and pandemic influenza,
4. Recognize the central role of the AABB Interorganizational Task Force on Domestic Disasters and Acts of Terrorism in the development and implementation of a national strategy to address potentially massive blood and blood product shortages during a pandemic of influenza by
- a. assuring blood and plasma systems' input into key federal policy making and communication
 - b. promoting communication and cooperation amongst state and local public health authorities and appropriate blood collection organizations, hospitals, medical professional organizations and patient advocacy organizations
5. Develop national principles under which state and local public health authorities and health care providers can prioritize allocation of and minimize disparities in blood and blood products availability and use during critical shortages