

MEDIA RELEASE

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MEMO COS/NEWS EDITORS:

DR GEOFF CHAPMAN IS AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEW

Tasmanians urged to be alert and not alarmed about Human Swine Flu

Tasmanian GPs are urging people be 'alert but not alarmed', when H1N1 (human swine flu) virus arrives in Tasmania.

General Practice Tasmania spokesman, Dr Geoff Chapman, said that it is understandable that people would be concerned, but it is important they remain calm and follow the steps recommended by the Director of Public Health.

If people are concerned about flu symptoms or contact that they may have had with others, they should call the Human Swine Flu helpline: 1800 358 362 (1800 FLU DOC). This is an important first step to screen people and direct them appropriately. If they are advised that they are unlikely to have Human Swine Flu, they may be directed to see their GP. They should then contact the surgery by telephone to convey this advice and make an appointment.

"We need to avoid people just turning up at their general practice or other health care facility without first calling the Help line because, if they do have symptoms, they risk infecting others." Dr Chapman said.

Practices are also being asked to implement some simple precautions to keep their waiting rooms safe and this is good advice for everyone at this time. Keeping your distance (at least one metre) from anyone with symptoms, simple hand hygiene and regularly cleaning surfaces that may be contaminated by others. "Practices will be removing magazines and toys from waiting rooms during this time, so it may pay to bring your own reading matter and something to keep your children occupied", he said

Dr Chapman also encouraged patients to be aware of the likely demand on GP services and to be considerate. "GPs can expect to be busy at this time of year anyway, and there will be many people with chronic conditions who will want to refresh their prescriptions and get advice in the event that they need to be confined at home. GPs, practice nurses and receptionists are also expected to help staff the network of Flu Clinics when these are activated, putting further strain on practices at this time."

Ends...

The General Practice Tasmania network is a unique statewide infrastructure that supports contemporary general practice in Tasmania by linking GPs with each other, by supporting all members of the general practice team and, increasingly, by employing or supporting allied health professionals such as physiotherapists, dieticians and psychologists to be part of the primary care team. General Practice Tasmania is also a proud member of the Australian General Practice Network.

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