



June 5, 2009

Maxine Hayes, M.D.
State Health Officer
Washington State Department of Health
PO Box 47890
Olympia, Washington 98504-7890

Dear Dr. Hayes:

The Washington State Hospital Association is supportive of the action being taken by the Washington State Department of Health in initiating emergency rule making per Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 246-101-015(4). This would require hospitals to report "suspected" H1N1 cases for 120 days. Our understanding, which we still need to have confirmed in writing, is that "suspected" is defined as positive test results for 120 days.

We understand the department is planning to ask for emergency rules at least one more time in order to extend the reporting period. Flu is not a current notifiable condition. We will support this additional notification requirement for only as long as necessary to assure that this strain of influenza is not any more virulent as the common flu.

H1N1 was identified in late April 2009 and thousands of cases have been reported. To date, this virus has been described as mild, but there have been deaths. It is believed that the virus will become endemic, causing disease as few have immunity.

Understanding what hospitals and the department can do to minimize illness and death will be helpful in safeguarding our communities.

Sincerely,



Leo Greenawalt
President and CEO

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