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Influenza epidemic of 2015-16 influenza season in Taiwan

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The 2015-2016 influenza season, was a tough period for Taiwan, having 1932 confirmed severe and complicated influenza cases including 328 estimated deaths. Most severe cases (about 77%) were infected with influenza A (H1N1) pdm09 virus. The majority of severe complicated influenza cases and deaths were adult aged 50-64 years. The incidences among all age groups were highest compared to the same period in the last 3 years, especially in the 50-64 age group. The main attacked age group changed from 65 years above to 50-64 years, similar demographic pattern seen in 2009 H1N1 pandemic. The government-funded influenza vaccination program in 2015-2016, following the international consensus, mainly targeted the elders aged more than 65 years, children aged six months through elementary school students and people aged above 50 years with chronic medical conditions. As a result, most people aged 50-64 years have not received influenza vaccines. In addition, the coverage rate of people with chronic diseases was only about 9%. Due to these reasons, in 2016/17 season, we plan to increase the purchase of influenza vaccines and vaccination points, as well as the awareness of the public, to improve the vaccination coverage rates and subsequently lower influenza incidence among people with chronic diseases.

Biography

Ya-tzu Chang is a Public Health Officer of the Department of Division of Preparedness and Emerging Infectious Disease in Taiwan Centers for Disease Control. She is responsible for policy making of influenza prevention and control and has handled experiences on 2009 H1N1 pandemic influenza and H7N9 influenza in Taiwan.

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