



NEW COLLEGE
OXFORD

POLICY DOCUMENT

*Planning for an Influenza
Pandemic*

The University has circulated a draft pandemic influenza plan and has instigated a **Pandemic Planning Team**, which has the following functions:

- (i) To plan and review procedures prior to an outbreak of influenza in the UK
- (ii) To assess outcomes and review and amend plans and procedures in the event of an outbreak of influenza in the UK

In the event of an outbreak, a Pandemic Website and emergency telephone helpline will be instigated and implementation of plans and procedures within the (central) University will be the responsibility of a **Crisis Management Team** headed by the Registrar.

College Pandemic Team

A counterpart to the University team will be set up within the College and will have the role of planning and reviewing procedures within the College, assessing outcomes and amending plans and procedures in the event of an outbreak of influenza, and liaising with the University Pandemic Planning Team.

The College Pandemic Team must have delegated powers to make decisions on behalf of the College.

The suggested members of the College Team are:

Accountant
Bursar
Home Bursar
Chaplain
College Nurse
Cox and Salvesen Fellows
Dean
IT Officer
Senior Tutor

The Team should be sufficiently large to allow for attrition among its membership. The Bursar will act as convenor and the Team will nominate a convenor in his/her absence.

Assumptions

The University plan assumes that there will most likely be a period of at least **15 weeks** during which the pandemic will need to be continuously monitored and plans and procedures adapted to prevailing circumstances.

Medical advice suggests it could be assumed that at any time 1 person in 5 is infected of which 1 in 5 might be seriously ill.

Thus 100 out of 500 students might be infected at any one time and 20 of them might be seriously ill, and 30 out of 100 members of staff might be infected at any one time and 4 of them might be seriously ill.

The reality is that a proportion of staff may not wish to put their families at risk by coming into contact with 'flu sufferers and will stay away from work. Staff who are vulnerable for health reasons or who care for elderly relatives or who have children may not come to work. Each section of the College will have to plan for this contingency.

Business Continuity

The objective of the plan is to ensure business continuity so far as possible while protecting students and staff.

Certain decisions could not be taken by colleges and would have to be taken by the central University or by the University and colleges jointly, including:

(i) Admissions

The incidence of an outbreak of influenza could necessitate the deferral of student recruitment procedures.

(ii) Examinations

The incidence of an outbreak of influenza could necessitate the deferral of examinations.

(iii) University services

The incidence of an outbreak of influenza could necessitate the closure or withdrawal of laboratory, lecture and library facilities, telephone and computer services (including communal systems such as Isadore, Weblearn and Herald), sports facilities, counselling and welfare and other University services.

The College will have to take decisions about their staff and delivery of services to their members and these are described in further detail below.

Staff and services

The College's ability to provide business continuity will vary according to the incidence of influenza among both academic and non-academic staff.

Where services are delivered by just one person or a few people, there is a possibility of complete discontinuity, but it is not admissible to discontinue some vital services.

The objective of business continuity has to be balanced against the risk of exposure to infection.

(i) Teaching

The Tuition Office and subject Tutors will need to be kept advised by the College Nurse and College Doctors about the medical condition of students.

It is advised that large gatherings should be avoided to reduce spread of infection.

Some meeting rooms, teaching rooms and offices are located on staircases that may be used to accommodate sick residents.

In the absence of teaching staff, Tutors will have to decide on a case basis whether teaching can be deferred or bought in.

Outcomes may be influenced by University decisions about delivery of lectures, classes and practicals.

Where widespread cancellation of University services occurs, taught courses may be postponed for the duration of term/academic year.

(ii) Library

Opening hours may have to be restricted, but services could be maintained if necessary through recruitment of Graduate students.

It is undesirable for large gatherings to congregate in communal areas.

(iii) IT

There are three members of staff dedicated to IT.

Some network services may be supported by an external agency.

Computer rooms may be maintained as necessary by graduate assistance, although closure may be a consequence of staff shortages.

It is undesirable for large gatherings to congregate in communal areas.

(iv) Accommodation

It will be necessary to maintain waste disposal services, cleaning of common parts and essential maintenance work (plumbing, lighting and heating).

Cleaning of individual rooms can be reduced if necessary. Individual residents should be encouraged to keep their rooms clean and tidy.

The recruitment of agency staff and contractors might be possible.

Signage should be installed in infected areas and use of communal bathroom and lavatory facilities may have to be restricted.

The College Nurse should advise on hygiene procedures in infected areas and issue protective clothing such as disposable gloves to staff.

(v) Catering

It is advised that large gatherings should be avoided to reduce spread of infection.

The College should therefore not endeavour to provide normal catering services in the event of a pandemic,

The delivery of food/drink to (the door of) rooms (of sick people) should be considered as it is far less risky than communal dining. The catering department will consider the production of 'food parcels' containing, for example, bottled water, wrapped fresh goods, dried soup, Pot Noodles etc.

People who are well would be left to self-cater, although there may be limited kitchen facilities in some staircases, and refrigerators and freezers would have to be installed on some staircases or in other communal areas.

It may or may not be possible to recruit agency staff if necessary.

(vi) Financial administration

Systems will need to be in force to continue to collect sums due and to pay salaries and bills rendered by suppliers and to run the payroll.

Accommodation records will need to be maintained for purposes of fees and charges.

Some students may require financial assistance. This can be dealt with through the usual hardship/welfare channels.

It is anticipated that a restricted bursary service could be operated in most eventualities.

(vii) Security

Security services will have to be maintained continuously.

Lodge Porters can be afforded by other members of staff or students, but this will require induction, especially in fire procedures.

It is not possible to use agency staff, because they are unfamiliar with the topography and operations of the College.

It is anticipated that it will be necessary for all administrative/service departments to work collaboratively and flexibly in whichever section needs most help at any particular time.

For the purpose of maintaining continuity of services, New College has paired with Mansfield College.

Junior members and other residents

The age group 18 – 25 is considered to be especially at risk.

It is anticipated that many junior members may return home of their own volition on notification of an outbreak of influenza in the UK, or even in advance of such an outbreak.

It appears from the University Plan that is unlikely in most eventualities that the University will require any individual member to go out of residence or will require members collectively to go out of residence.

Some junior members may be unable to leave Oxford on account of travel restrictions or other factors. It is assumed that up to 100 junior members may be in this position, but not all of them will be ill.

It is important to have telephone/email contact with residents, to minimise personal contact and enable communication with College staff and the College Doctor. **All residents must be asked to provide mobile phone numbers (mass texting is one way of communicating with people en masse).**

Members who are very seriously ill should be transferred to hospital if possible. It is likely that there will be a chronic shortage of hospital space.

Members may wish to or need to continue to reside in College accommodation, whether they are ill or otherwise.

There will be serious operational difficulties if all or most students remain in residence, since it will not be possible to isolate staircases that contain sick residents.

Communal areas including common rooms and sports facilities may be closed if necessary.

MEDICAL MATTERS (based on College Doctors' Plan)

1. When and How to Call for Help

The College should ensure that all students are registered with the College Doctor (or another local doctor). This is a requirement under the College Regulations.

The Department of Health has produced leaflets telling patients what to expect in the case of a pandemic, how to look after themselves and when to call for help.

These will be distributed at the beginning of a pandemic and will be available on the Web.

They will be given clear guidelines as to when to call for help. All student bedrooms have telephones.

Everyone will be given the Lodge telephone number to use when they develop flu symptoms so that they can be triaged and advised accordingly.

Oseltamivir (Tamiflu) will be distributed as part of that triage process

They should not phone 999 for routine advice.

2. General Measures to Contain the Pandemic

It will be difficult to stop flu spreading but certain measures may slow the rate of spread and reduce the total number of cases;

Students with flu should be encouraged to stay in their rooms and avoid social contact as far as possible.

Students returning from overseas who have been in contact with those suffering from Avian Flu should inform the College and be encouraged to confine themselves to their rooms and avoid social contact as far as reasonably practicable for seven days.

Communal areas such as libraries, computer rooms, Hall and the bar may be closed in an attempt to reduce social contact.

Staff with flu should be required to stay at home or be sent home if they become ill at work.

Open Days and Conferences should be cancelled.

3. Specific Infection Control Measures

Infection control measures, such as the use of tissues to cover the nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, bagging & binning dirty tissues, washing hands frequently with soap and water to reduce the spread of the virus from hands to face and to other people, particularly after blowing the nose or handling dirty tissues should be adopted.

Cleaning hard surfaces such as kitchen worktops and door handles with a normal cleaning product.

Anyone suffering from flu should wear a disposable face mask to protect others if it is absolutely essential for them to go out.

4. Care of Sick Students

Most students with flu will feel awful and will be bed ridden for at least 4-5 days, limiting their capacity to look after themselves.

Most students will prefer to stay in their own rooms, supported by their friends and neighbours.

Students should lay in emergency packs containing supplies of essential items such as food, paracetamol, tissues and a thermometer at the beginning of a pandemic.

Some students may be vulnerable because they live out of College and are socially isolated. Those who live out should be supported by the Welfare Team. Some may be relocated to College if there are empty rooms.

At the height of a pandemic 20-30% of the College population may have flu, 30% of those might have complications and a small percentage of those will need nursing care or hospitalisation.

Hospitals may be too stretched to admit all seriously ill patients.

Pastoral care will be important for those bereaved.

Disabled students with carers may need extra help if their usual carers are unwell.

5. Nursing

The College Nurse works part-time. She may or may not be able to increase her hours during a pandemic depending on her responsibilities outside the College. However, College Nurses have already organised a “buddying” system to help each other out. They will not, however, be able to nurse all flu victims in the College on their own.

The College may wish to consider employing extra nursing staff. The College Nurse will be responsible for organising nursing care and identifying possible recruits in advance (there are many retired nurses in Oxford).

The College Nurse may be able to train volunteers, including other students, in basic nursing skills and spotting alarm symptoms, particularly those who have already recovered from flu.

She will provide a nursing protocol in collaboration with the College Doctor.

Anyone nursing patients should wear disposable gloves, apron and a disposable mask.

Staff delivering essential supplies to students in their rooms will be less at risk but should still wear disposable gloves and they may want to wear disposable masks.

6. Medical Supplies

Supplies of gloves, aprons, masks, paper towels, tissues, alcohol hand rub and disposable thermometers will need to be purchased when a pandemic is imminent. There is a predicted shortfall in supply the College may wish to order soon. Even though normally disposable, gloves and aprons can be reused if washed. To calculate the number of gloves, masks, aprons and alcohol rubs required an initial suggestion would be two pairs of gloves, two masks, two aprons, two small bottles of alcohol hand rub and two disposable thermometers for every member of the College including staff.

The College Doctors suggest that an oxygen saturation monitor would be a useful tool to assess those with respiratory complications.

Packs of paracetamol and ibuprofen will be needed for students who have not bought their own supplies or have run out.

The College Nurse should have supplies of other symptomatic treatment at her disposal.

There should be enough Oseltamivir (Tamiflu) available through the NHS for treatment of all flu cases.

Oseltamivir will be distributed from local Chemists after telephone triage by trained lay operators manning a special PCT helpline.

It is only effective if taken in the first 48hrs of the illness.

We do not know if Oseltamivir will be effective. There is a fear that the pandemic flu virus may develop resistance to it.

The usual Seasonal Winter Flu immunisation will not be effective against pandemic flu but it may offer limited protection. Essential staff and vulnerable patients should be encouraged to have the normal flu vaccination at the beginning of each season.

At present it is unlikely that a pandemic flu immunisation will be developed in time to prevent pandemic flu but this may change.

Vesrion Date : September 2024