

**HEADLINE: Swine flu shot campaign could involve 600M doses**

**SUMMARY:** Health officials are preparing a swine flu vaccination campaign and predict as many as 600 million swine flu vaccination doses may be ready as soon as September. Rapid production, tracking side effects and administering the vaccine are issues still needing to be addressed. Swine flu has caused at least 27,000 illnesses and 127 deaths in the United States.

**STORY LINK:** [http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090626/ap\\_on\\_he\\_me/us\\_med\\_swine\\_flu](http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090626/ap_on_he_me/us_med_swine_flu)

**ANALYSIS:** The potential for a deadly strain of influenza that mirrors the 1918-19 outbreak - during which possibly 50 million people succumbed worldwide; 675,000 in the United States alone - necessitates advanced planning for a program of a scope not seen since the polio eradication campaign of the 1950s. Until the virus arrives in its seasonal form, scientists are unsure how many doses would be needed to confer immunity. The possibility exists that every person would need two shots, for a total of 600 million immunizations, some six times more than annually administered in the United States.

Every vaccine carries a risk of side effects and the short time available for development precludes extensive testing. This places public health officials in the position of having to balance the greater threat of a deadly virus with the potential for a vaccine-related adverse event. Given the impact of the 1918 outbreak and the safety record of modern vaccines, the likelihood is immunizations would proceed supported by detailed recordkeeping to track side effects.

The problem arises when other immunizations (including the regular seasonal flu shot) are given during the same time period. It becomes extremely difficult to establish a causal relationship to a particular vaccine when several are involved.

The persistent uncertainty - which will not be resolved until the virus assumes its final form - and the potential danger continue to point to a need for advance planning, emphasis on everyday precautions and awareness of public health guidelines. While unpleasant to consider, the massive disruptions of a national immunization campaign are preferable to the widespread and sudden deaths experienced nearly a century ago.