THE ROYAL SOCIETY &

THE ACADEMY OF MEDICAL SCIENCES

INQUIRY INTO PANDEMIC INFLUENZA

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About the ABPI

The Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI) brings together companies in Britain that research and manufacture prescription medicines (whether branded or generic), other organisations involved primarily on pharmaceutical research and development, and a range of others with an interest in the pharmaceutical industry operating in the UK. ABPI member companies manufacture and supply the vast majority of the medicines prescribed through the National Health Service and are major exporters to countries all over the world.

The APBI provides a wide scope of services and support for its members. It represents the views of the pharmaceutical industry in Westminster, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, as well as at UK, European and international levels through maintaining close contacts with politicians, academia, and the media. It is a full and active partner in the Ministerial Industry Strategy Group, working with the Treasury, the Department of Health and the Department of Trade and Industry, in formulating policies affecting the pharmaceutical industry, the Government and the NHS.

In addition, extensive links have been developed with health managers, patient advocacy groups, training and education bodies, research councils, and professional bodies in the healthcare field.

The ABPI has a relationship with the UK Vaccine Industry Group which aims to:

- promote the positive benefits of vaccination as a key element in improving the health of the nation
- represent the UK vaccine industry to all interested parties

What does the scientific understanding (basic research to clinical application) of avian and pandemic influenza, in the short and long term, imply for:

- **Treatment: The use of existing, and the development of, new drugs and vaccines**

The avian flu H5N1 strain has not undergone the “mutation” process that would make it transmissible from human to human. No specific vaccine can therefore be prepared until it emerges, and anti-viral agents are the best defence. Although some H5N1 vaccines are in development, they will not necessarily be an exact match for a new pandemic strain. There are, however, four anti-viral agents. Two of these are the new class of anti-virals: Relenza (GlaxoSmithKline) and Tamiflu (Roche).

GSK is expanding the company’s production of Relenza through a £50m investment in manufacturing capacity, and is contributing to various governments’ pandemic stockpiles around the world. Roche is filling pandemic stockpile orders for Tamiflu from more than 50 countries worldwide. It has donated three million courses of treatment to the World Health Organisation’s rapid response stockpile and a further two million for regional stockpiles in developing countries.

Roche has also made substantial efforts to increase its manufacturing capacity. Partnerships with companies interested in partnering in the production of Tamiflu have been announced or are being arranged.

- **Clinical care: Diagnosis, basic understanding of the diseases; infection control; transmission**

Pharmaceutical companies will have to be prepared not only to lose some of their staff through illness and those who need to care for ill family and friends but also the medically trained may need to be dispatched to areas of particular need in the health service.

Alongside all other types of companies the industry will have to consider how to limit the contact its employees have between themselves and the public. For example, industry representatives who are normally on the road visiting medical professionals may well have to limit or alter their daily routine.

With a pandemic flu, the health service will be over-stretched and so pharmacies will need to be issued with patient group directives allowing them to issue prophylactic anti-virals under strict protocols without the patient needing to visit their GP.

- **Strategies and preparedness for an outbreak: modelling and surveillance**

Pharmaceutical companies are preparing processes and systems to ensure that if a pandemic flu were to occur essential medicines would continue to be manufactured and distributed to those who need them. Companies are looking at how to strengthen and safeguard their supply chain.

What lessons can be learnt from other disease outbreaks and more general public emergencies, and the associated emergency planning responses?

Could immunotherapy play a role as a treatment to prevent Rhesus incompatability? As soon as there are pandemic survivors, the blood transfusion service could start collecting immunoglobulin and use it as a prophylactic treatment.