



TRUST FOR AMERICA'S HEALTH CALLS FOR NEW APPROACH TO FLU PREPAREDNESS

Recent Report Offers Strategies and Recommendations for Improving National Readiness

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Washington, DC, October 6, 2004 – The following is a statement from Shelley A. Hearne, DrPH, Executive Director of Trust for America's Health:

“The production halt of approximately half of this season's influenza vaccine is a troubling development for our nation. It exemplifies the lack of overall preparedness in the U.S. for not just the flu, but also on a wide range of public health crises.

The flu strikes an estimated 10 to 20 percent of the U.S. population and is responsible for approximately 36,000 deaths each year, yet we do not have a unified and effective flu management strategy in this country.

We just have not made the necessary investments to protect Americans from unanticipated contingencies -- ranging from the emergence of a possible new flu strain that could cause a pandemic to problems with the vaccine supply. This latest complication sends a message loud and clear -- now is the time to fix hit and miss approach to the flu.”

TFAH released a report, “Facing the Flu: From the Bird Flu to a Possible Pandemic, Why Isn't America Ready?” in February 2004, which outlined our nation's lack of preparedness for a possible flu pandemic. The report offers recommendations for improving national response and protection capabilities and is available at www.healthymamericans.org.

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Trust for America's Health is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to saving lives by protecting the health of every community and working to make disease prevention a national priority. www.healthymamericans.org