

Swine Flu in New Pattern, Experts Say

June 15—One of America's top infectious disease specialists, Dr. Michael Osterholm, has just confirmed what a Pasteur Institute expert had been warning of earlier in the month. The swine flu, H1N1 is not following the normal, seasonal pattern, but may spread faster and become more deadly than any recent outbreaks.

There would normally be no flu cases in the United States in June. But flu hospitalizations are increasing in some states, and continue to be high in New York and New England. Worldwide, many hundreds of thousands have already been infected, and 150 are confirmed dead from the flu. The fear is that as the pandemic continues, a more deadly strain could develop. This flu virus is of the same type as the 1918 pandemic which killed an estimated 50 to 100 million people around the globe.

The head of a research unit at France's Pasteur Institute, Prof. Sylvie Van der Werf, said earlier this month that a program of universal vaccination should begin—the sooner the better—and include countries of the North and South. Normally a new influenza virus substitutes itself for the virus of the seasonal flu. This is not taking place now, she said. We're in an entirely new situation. We don't know if there will be one or two viruses next Autumn in France. Everything indicates that the virus will spread massively in the

Northern Hemisphere, and it may happen before the fall, Dr. Van der Werf said.

Consider these warnings in light of the Obama Administration's commitment to slash medical spending, and cut back on already severely restricted hospital access. Washington insiders have reported that the Administration thinks it needs to sneak through its deadly healthcare reform policy quickly, before the beginning of a new flu season in October raises public awareness. The swine flu virus may not wait that long.

#