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Health Freedom Column

Tamiflu and FluMist: Recipe for Pandemic

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The only people who have come down with the H5N1 bird flu so far are people in intimate contact with sick birds except for one a girl who appears to have caught the flu from her brother in Viet Nam. She was treated with Tamiflu but the virus was resistant to the much touted anti-viral and she died. Her brother, however, recovered.

People caring for the girl did not come down with bird flu so the virus clearly has not yet mutated to become transmissible between humans in that case. So, as of now, we have a bird flu (just like the ones that travel with the flocks around the world every year, by the way), but we lack a pandemic virus. The bird flu virus lacks two bits of genetic information to change from what it is now, a virus that infects birds, to a pandemic one that can spread from person to person. And, by the way, without a pandemic virus, no vaccine made from the bird flu virus will confer protection against a pandemic virus (assuming that vaccines do actually confer such protection, of course).

While we may not have a virus to make a vaccine from, we do know how to make the bird flu virus pandemic. We know which two DNA sequences it lacks. And we know how to deliver them to help it become a real killer. It's on sale at Wal-Mart!

FluMist, a nasal vaccine easily available at Wal-Mart and elsewhere, contains 3 live viruses. You shoot it up your nose and your immune system gets a chance to make antibodies to three live, weakened viruses while the manufacturer hopes against hope that one of these three is actually causes a disease this year and there is actually some benefit to taking the stuff. Of course, if you are immune compromised or go near someone who is, you will get sick or infect them with the virus and they can get the flu. So can you, since the side effects of FluMist are, not surprisingly, the flu!

But, even if they are not the right flu viruses this year, taking FluMist (recommended for children between 6 and 23 months although FluMist is not approved by the FDA for kids under 5 due to their immature immune systems), means that two of the FluMist viruses can lend the missing DNA segments to the bird flu virus which it is lacking in order to become a human pandemic. The bird flu virus can easily pick up the two snippets of DNA that it needs and now, instead of shedding attenuated live FluMist viruses, you could be shedding live pandemic bird flu virus, courtesy of MedImmune. Of course, you are likely come down with the bird flu, too!

Tamiflu, the much hyped and immensely profitable antiviral drug (which is making Donald Rumsfeld vast amounts of money), is, by the way, nearly useless against bird flu: the virus is already developing resistance to the drug. But Mr. Rumsfeld can rest secure knowing that the US government has already spent \$2 Billion on Tamiflu and is fixing to buy at least another \$1 Billion of the useless stuff. Of course, the dosage is not known for this ineffective drug.

You see, the cool thing is that all the mice treated with Tamiflu after infection with the H5N1 virus died. Um, er, the human pandemic H5N1 virus does not yet exist officially. So the test, which did not work, was against a virus which is not infective to humans but kills mice. Well, that's worth \$3 B, isn't it? If this is what's going on with the light of day shining on events, what would it be like under **BARDA**? Things can only get worse with a secret agency self-dealing for its own benefit in partnership with the pharmaceutical industry.

People inoculated with live viruses are well known to serve as dissemination points for the virus which may be much more dangerous in vulnerable, weakened, very old or very young people. FluMist is no exception but, adding this year's problem child, the Asian Bird Flu, into the mix makes Flu Mist or any other live flu vaccine, a very, very bad idea.

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