

Flu has Stillwater under the weather

By Moira K. Wiley
Staff Writer

According to FluSTAR, a system that tracks flu activity, the flu has officially hit Oklahoma City. FluSTAR also has confirmed an outbreak of influenza in Stillwater.

Local health officials seem to have differing views on the influenza epidemic.

“From Jan. 1 to Feb. 9, we’ve had a total of 80 flu patients,” said Shyla Eggers, public relations director for Stillwater Medical Center. “This might not sound like a lot, but many more people may have went to the Warren Clinic or their regular doctors.

“Most of our patients’ symptoms have included high fever, chills and body aches. Basically, it’s like a cold, only much worse than any cold you’ve ever had.”

Angela Percy, lead nurse with the Payne County Health Department, said she’s not always in the know about how many flu patients they have because department doctors take a swab of a patient and send it directly to the state health department for testing.

“A lot of people are sick in Stillwater and Perkins with flu-like symptoms and are calling it the flu,” Percy said. “But, as far as I know, we haven’t seen any influenza patients at the health clinic. When I talked to the state health department, they said they don’t have any record of positive flu results for Payne County.”

But Dr. Terry Brown at the Warren Clinic said “the flu is starting to hit Stillwater now. Mostly, we’re seeing influenza A. Our pediatricians say they have seen a lot of children with the flu and now we’re seeing more cases in adults, too.

“We’ve performed 115 influenza A/B tests since the beginning of the season this year. Of those tests performed, 40 came back positive for influenza A but none for influenza B. Most of the positive A results have occurred in the last month.”

Tamiflu is said to be the No. 1 prescribed medicine for treating the flu. It is part of a class of drugs called neuraminidase inhibitors and treats the most common strains of influenza A and B.

Steve Rogers, with the OSU Health Center, said, “There’s been a lot of flu patients, but no more than usual.”

“Health care workers have seen a steady increase of the flu in the last month,” said Dr. Kristy Bradley, assistant state epidemiologist.

Medical officials expect the number of Oklahoma influenza cases to increase in March.

One of the best methods of prevention is by getting a flu vaccine administered at the outset of the flu season. Medical personnel say it's not too late for those who would still like to receive the vaccine - if they can find any available.

"The flu season runs through May, so it would still benefit people who want to get the vaccine now," Eggers said. "Currently, SMC doesn't have any more vaccine available."

The PCHD is also currently out of vaccine.

The Warren Clinic does administer the vaccine and has some available but it is being used for high-risk patients, such as those with chronic disease or those older than 65.

The OSU Health Center also has a limited supply of the vaccine.

Those who would like to learn more about influenza can call (800) I-GOT-FLU