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CDC confirms first two western Mass. swine flu cases at Amherst College

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On Monday evening, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) confirmed samples from two Amherst College students sent to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) late last week are positive for H1N1 influenza, or swine flu. The two students, ages 19 and 20, are the first confirmed swine flu cases in western Massachusetts.

"The news should not be cause for alarm," said the college's director of Health Services, Warren H. Morgan in a statement released Monday night.

The college has treated every student who has tested positive for type A influenza as an H1N1 flu case by isolating them for at least one week from the onset of symptoms and prescribing antiviral medications to the ill students, the statement said.

Health Services has reported a "leveling off" of new type A influenza cases, though four more students tested positive for the flu over the weekend bringing the college's total to 13 students who have been isolated because of their symptoms.

All are doing well and expected to recover. Six of the students who have spent a week in isolation were released Monday after recovering, including one of the two students who tested positive for swine flu and had spent eight instead of seven days quarantined as added precaution.

With 13 at Amherst, and one at both Mount Holyoke and Smith colleges, 15 Five College students have been isolated out of precaution for flu-like symptoms, which could be swine flu.

The University of Massachusetts and Hampshire College have not had any suspected swine flu cases.

Monday evening the MDPH released a statement confirming 28 additional swine flu cases in the state bringing the total to 34 in Massachusetts.

The increase in the number of confirmed cases is the result of confirmatory testing now being done at the William A. Hinton State Laboratory Institute in Boston. Previously, testing of all suspect cases was performed at the CDC in Atlanta, Ga., which resulted in a backlog of samples for testing.

Each of the new cases is expected to fully recover and none of the cases are hospitalized, the MDPH statement said.

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