

Telephone Interviews

Multi-state Investigation of H1N1
Influenza-related Deaths

Overview

- Important things
- Case proxy
 - Who, contact information, phoning, challenges
- Controls
 - Who, phoning, challenges
- Interview tips
- Preface to questions 18-21
- Possible questions

Basics & Important Things (I)

- Interview is voluntary – obtain verbal consent
- Each question can be refused
- Case interviews likely sensitive – death of family member
- We interview adults (≥ 18 years of age)

Basics & Important Things (II)

- Follow interview script as able for consistency
- Study permission (IRB) may be pending in some tribal areas – set aside charts/do not contact until approval obtained
- Maintain a call log for each case/control

Determining Case Proxy

- Proxy priority (*listed in methodology*)
 1. Any adult living with/caring for case immediately prior to illness
 2. Any close friend or adult relative that lived in the case's immediate vicinity
 3. Any adult relative that lived in the same state
 4. Any adult relative that lived out-of-state

Case Proxy/Control Contact Information

- Addresses & telephone numbers came from laboratory reports, medical records, and death certificates
- The medical record face sheet is a rich source of information
- Disease intervention specialists (STD disease trackers) may have access to informative databases
- Possible access to Accurint database

Contacting the Case Proxy

- Attempt to contact case proxy at least 5 times over 2 weeks
 - 2 times during the day at different times of day (am & pm) on different days of the week,
 - 2 times at night on different nights
 - 1 time on a weekend
- Call all potential contact numbers at least twice
 - Priority of potential contact numbers: 1) Home or cell phone; 2) work
 - Leave message on answering machine (scripted)

Case Proxy Letters

- Some states will send letters to case proxies alerting them to study & phone call

State letterhead

Date

Proxy address

Dear Proxy:

As you may know, in 2009 our nation suffered a flu pandemic that affected many people and families. At the XX State Health Department we are working to learn more about peoples' experiences with the influenza (flu) virus called H1N1 or swine flu that caused the pandemic so we can better protect Alaskans against the flu in the future.

We understand that you lost someone close to you to the flu and we are so sorry for your loss. Although many people think of flu as a mild disease, the truth is that even the common flu can make people very sick.

To better understand why the pandemic flu made some people so sick, we would like to learn more about the person that passed away after getting the flu. For this reason we are interested in speaking with you about their healthcare, medical history, and living environment. In the next 2 weeks, someone from the XX State Health Department will call you at XXX-XXX-XXXX. If

Case Proxy Challenges - Solutions

- Proxy knows very little about the case's living situation (interviewer judgment)
 - Ask for the name and contact information for another proxy; however complete the interview
 - Use the same interview form for a second proxy and fill in the missing information
 - Indicate the best answer for each question (circle, highlight, etc.)
- Language barriers
 - Use interpreter if available (Spanish forms created by Arizona)
- Inability to locate or contact any potential proxy
 - Abstract case medical record information
 - DO NOT need to fully interview the matched controls

Contacting the Controls

- Call the control list in the order of randomization
 - Start with the first two controls on the list
- Make from 3 to 5 attempts to contact a control before moving to the next control on the list
- Attempts should include a weekday daytime, weekday evening, and a weekend call
 - Call all potential contact numbers at least twice
 - Priority of potential contact numbers: 1) Home or cell phone; 2) work

Control Challenges - Solutions

- Control was hospitalized
 - Complete interview and later verify dates of hospitalization
- Language barriers
 - Use interpreter if available (Spanish forms created by Arizona)
 - DO NOT exclude on basis of language spoken
- Inability to contact a potential control
 - Move to next control on randomized list

Interview tips

- Be sincere—try not to just read the script
- Familiarity with interview questions will increase efficiency and comfort
- Emphasize confidentiality and voluntary nature of questions
- Be sure to ask where the sick person was living at the time of illness!

Preface to questions 18-21

- Prior to asking question 18, explain that these questions are being asked in other states with different climates and living conditions
 - Question 18 -- wood-burning stoves
 - Question 19 -- running water in the house
 - Question 20 -- working sinks
 - Question 21 -- working flush toilets in the house

Possible questions

- “How did you get my number?”
 - “Flu is a state-reportable disease. Providers are required to let the State of Arizona know about the illness. We got your contact information from your/*the case’s* provider.
- “Why are you calling me?”
 - “We are trying to learn more about why the pandemic H1N1 flu made some people so sick and why others did not get as sick. We want to learn how to better protect people.”