

Avian Flu Key Findings Discussed.

October 17, 2007

Dr. Andrew Simor, Chief, Microbiology and Infectious Diseases, explains why experts continue to monitor the virus' strong pandemic potential.

The avian or bird flu has been identified as the H5N1 strain of influenza A. In the last three years, there have been over 300 human cases of avian flu reported in parts of south-east Asia and a smaller number of cases reported in the Middle East.

Many experts believe this strain of influenza A, has a very strong potential to signal the next pandemic influenza or global epidemic of influenza in the next five to ten years.

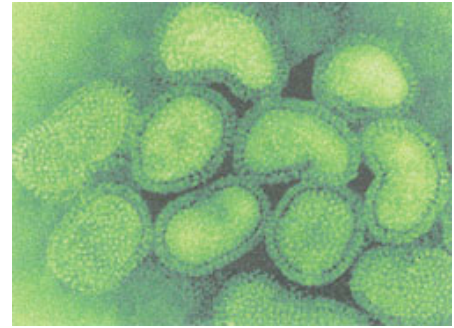
In the simplest terms, for a pandemic to develop, three elements are required. There needs to be a new strain of virus from which the human population is not immune.

The virus has to cause disease in humans. Thirdly, the virus has to have the ability to spread from person to person.

Currently, the avian flu meets two of the three criteria, as there have only been few reports of person to person spread of avian flu.

Lack of effective person to person spread is one of the main reasons we have not yet seen a pandemic caused by this strain. However, the virus continues to mutate or change making avian flu one of the leading candidates for the cause of the next pandemic influenza.

[back](#)



Avian Flu under the microscope.