

**Newsweek**

# 'Fear & the Flu: The New Age of Pandemics'

## NEWSWEEK

From the magazine issue dated May 25, 2009

Such a big scare sends people into a panic, and creates a smoke screen for all that ails the world.

*Joann Lee Frank, Clearwater, Fla.*

I was reluctant to buy the "fear & the Flu" issue, expecting articles blaming Mexicans for the flu pandemic. I was surprised to see that, instead of blame, you provided scientific information for regular people like me. What really got my attention was the positive light you shed on the way our government has dealt with this scare. Mexicans have gone through fear, distrust and anguish. The price paid for closing businesses, schools, airports, etc., has been high. Mexico, immersed in an economic, security and, now, pandemic crisis, dared to do the right thing and faced its problems head on.

*Rafael de Los Santos Diaz, Monterrey, Mexico*

Laurie Garrett highlights the challenges we now face, such as intensive livestock farming, so that billions can eat meat. Not mentioned in the article is the inadequate collaboration between the human- and animal-health communities. There is a growing international movement called "One Health" that promotes more communication between physicians, veterinarians and other life-sciences professionals, and it's been endorsed by many national and global organizations concerned with emerging infectious diseases and other public-health threats.

*Laura H. Kahn, M.D., Princeton, N.J.*

Let's put the swine flu in perspective, please. 'The New Age of Pandemics'? Or, Continuing Age of Endemic Media Sensationalism? The swine flu is proving no more lethal than normal influenza strains, and even Mexico's fatalities are far fewer than regular seasonal outbreaks. With tens of thousands dying each year in auto accidents, and hundreds of thousands dying from tobacco, Americans would be better served by taking routine health precautions against all communicable diseases—and by a media that keeps coverage in proportion to real dangers, lest we continue to be led down the road of irrational fears, indefensible government policies and mass hysteria.

*Steven Meacham, Shelton, Wash.*

Over the past few weeks, the U.S. hog and pork markets were the unfortunate victims of the inaccurately dubbed "swine flu" virus. Your cover implies that swine are the guilty party in the current flu crisis. What about the livelihood of the swine industry? Already, buyers such as China and Russia have ceased purchasing U.S. pork (they make up 20 percent of the market), while other countries have declared a moratorium. This may affect other parts of our agricultural sector at a time when we are working to rebuild our economy.

*Mike Sommers, Copper Canyon, Texas*

More people are contracting HIV and dying of AIDS than the flu, but we're not hearing about it. I would prefer to see articles on real, growing pandemics that are creating millions of orphans. I work in Swaziland, where 40 percent of the population is infected with HIV, and more than 10 percent are orphaned children under the age of 15. Africa is being devastated; Southeast Asia and China are fast becoming the next wave. Millions have died from this disease, especially women and children, compared with a few dozen from the swine flu.

*Heidi Lum, Advocates For Africa's Children, Honolulu, Hawaii*

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