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December 10, 2003

Julie Gerberding, MD, MPH  
Director  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
1600 Clifton Rd.  
Atlanta, GA 30333

Dear Dr. Gerberding,

As you are well aware, we are in the midst of flu season and many around the country are concerned about protecting themselves and having access to the influenza vaccine. In my home state of South Dakota, this year we have been lucky to have only mild flu activity so far. I was pleased to learn that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is working with vaccine manufacturers, state health departments, medical professionals, and others to assess the status of the current flu vaccine supply in the United States. It is my understanding that manufacturers have produced 83 million doses of flu vaccine this year, and that those producers have already shipped the last of the season's available vaccines. While manufacturers cannot produce any more vaccines in time for this year's flu season, I would recommend you consider the follow actions in preparation for next year:

**Develop an influenza vaccine national action plan.** Influenza hospitalizes 114,000 and kills 36,000 Americans each year. It is unclear when we may experience a flu season of pandemic proportions, and CDC should expedite the development of a national action plan in order to prepare for this possibility. Specifically, the action plan should address long-term vaccine production issues related to surge capacity and mass vaccine production. Such a plan should address community access issues, and should ensure that there is a coordinated approach to vaccine distribution. Such a plan will ensure that no area, including rural and Native American communities, is left behind due to large dose requests by highly populated regions and cities.

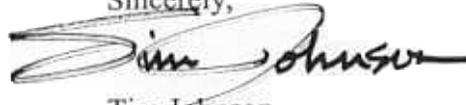
**Explore the feasibility of having a national contract with influenza vaccine producers for ensuring a national stockpile.** To protect those at highest risk and address shortage problems, CDC should explore the possibility of establishing a national stockpile through direct contracts with vaccine producers.

**Develop innovative approaches to speed access to vaccines for new influenza strains.** As we have experienced this year, vaccine development has not kept up with the pace of new flu strain development. Promoting an expedited production and manufacturing process is essential to combating new strains of the disease and are important for successful preventive efforts. To this end, CDC should work with its governmental and non-governmental partners to ensure speedy access to flu vaccinations.

**Request additional funds in your 2005 budget for influenza activities.** Overall, CDC should request additional funds for the items mentioned above, as well as funds for enhanced outreach and education on the flu and flu prevention.

As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I am willing to support a request from the Bush Administration for additional funding in this area. I look forward to working with you on this issue in the upcoming year, as well as other important public health concerns. If you have any questions, please contact me directly or have a member of your staff contact Mara Baer in my office at 202-224-5842.

With warmest regards during the holiday season,

Sincerely,  
  
Tim Johnson  
U.S. Senate