

3.11 Senator S.C. Ferguson of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the stockpile of H1N1 vaccine and Tamiflu:

Given that the U.K. Chief Medical Officer recently predicted that there will not be a third wave of H1N1 flu, could the Minister indicate how much of the stockpile of vaccine and Tamiflu remains, in quantities and monetary terms, and how much of the emergency spending agreed at the last sitting of the States has been drawn down? I think it was the last but one sitting; I apologise for that.

The Deputy of Trinity (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

I shall ask my Assistant Minister, who has financial responsibility, to answer.

Deputy E.J. Noel of St. Lawrence (Assistant Minister for Health and Social Services - rapporteur):

The U.K. predictions have little bearing on Jersey. Our experience to date with the H1N1 pandemic has been very different to that in the U.K. and, as such, we may yet experience a second wave in Jersey. The World Health Organisation is still in alert level 6 for the H1N1 swine flu pandemic and has not changed from alert level 3 for the H5N1 avian flu pandemic. The following quantities of Tamiflu are still in stock: 12,577 packs with an expiry date of January 2012, cost £130,046; 75,000 packs with an expiry date of September 2013, cost £775,000. The amounts of vaccine that remain: 4,000 doses of G.S.K. (GlaxoSmithKline) vaccine currently in stock but with a commitment to receive approximately 80,000 more doses. The latter is subject to ongoing negotiations with the manufacturer. The cost cannot be disclosed subject to the commercial confidentiality restrictions in the contract. A further 22,200 doses of the Baxter vaccine is in stock with no further commitment. Similarly, commercial confidentiality restrictions in the contract mean that I cannot disclose the cost to the House. Regarding the emergency spending agreed at the last States sitting or the sitting before last, a Ministerial Decision has been signed to request a drawdown of the sum of £478,000 for the vaccines.

[12:15]

The Bailiff:

The reason for saying not going slowly is that technical questions, I think, should be better done by way of written questions. Oral questions are for concise short answers.

3.11.1 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Yes, Sir. I do appreciate that I will not do that again in future. Since the U.K. Government have revealed the costs, I am surprised at that. But what I would like to know is will there be a report on the outbreak, the problems, the adverse reactions to Tamiflu and the vaccine and will the Minister or the Assistant Minister ensure that such a report is made to this House before publication in a professional journal?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

It is the intention of the Health and Social Services Department to conduct a thorough debrief of the pandemic outbreak when it has ceased, purely so we can gather the information and learn lessons. I am sure that a report will be produced at that time for public circulation.

3.11.2 Deputy D.J. De Sousa of St. Helier:

Bearing in mind that I believe around £10 million has been put aside by the States to cover the cost of Tamiflu for the H1N1, can the Assistant Minister circulate to Members exactly the cost to the States thus far on the funding for Tamiflu? Also, I believe there have been cases of bird flu in China. Has the States got an agenda to keep any eye on this and a watching brief?

The Bailiff:

I am going to disallow the second part. I am sorry; that does not arise out of the question. Can you just answer the first part, Assistant Minister?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

I think the good Deputy is slightly confused here. The spending on Tamiflu does not come anywhere near £10 million. The spending on the pandemic comes to a similar amount and all those amounts have gone through this House. I believe that a full report is being compiled to match what funding we voted for and how it has been spent and that is an ongoing piece of work. That, again, will be published.

3.11.3 Senator J.L. Perchard:

Could the Assistant Minister inform the House, bearing in mind 85 per cent of school children have received the swine flu vaccine, what percentage take-up of the swine vaccine there has been among the population of the Island and can he confirm that he did say there are 80,000 unused individual stocks of the inoculation in the department?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

The first part of the Senator's question, just over 40 per cent of the Island's population in total have been given the vaccine and, therefore, have inoculation against the H1N1 virus. With regards to the 80,000 doses that he referred to, they are doses that are committed to on order. We do not have those in stock. We are currently in negotiations with the manufacturer to see if there is a way that we can mitigate our exposure to the cost of purchasing those 80,000 vaccines. The reason why it is 80,000 vaccines is that, along with virtually every other jurisdiction throughout the world on advice that was consistent throughout the world, we entered into contracts to purchase 2 doses per head of population. Subsequently only one dose, in the majority of cases, has been required and, therefore, the sums speak for themselves.

3.11.4 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

The Assistant Minister says that we are not like the U.K. and we cannot consider that there will be no third wave. Would the Assistant Minister like to outline the grounds on which he says that? I cannot see that there will be so much difference between us and the U.K. in this particular instance of a panic epidemic.

Deputy E.J. Noel:

We are very different to the U.K. because we managed to contain the virus. It did not get out of control. We succeeded where other jurisdictions failed.