

Birds and Pigs and Vaccines... Oh My!

Late on October 23, Obama declared the H1N1/swine flu outbreak a “national emergency.” The move was intended to reduce some of the federal “red tape” that prevents doctors and hospitals from responding more quickly to the increasing number of infections by allowing, for example, the rapid establishment of drive-up and tent clinic facilities. Some might ask why that bureaucracy—with rules defining that a care tent cannot be more than a certain distance from the hospital building—exists in the first place. The White House stated, “The foundation of our national approach to the H1N1 flu has been preparedness at all levels—personal, business, and government—and this proclamation helps that effort by advancing our overall response capability.” Translate that as: “We don’t want another Katrina.”

According to the *New York Times*, more than one thousand people nationwide have died from the swine flu, and approximately 11 million doses of flu vaccine have been distributed. But in a typical year, more than 36,000 Americans die from the “regular” flu, suggesting to many that the response to the swine flu outbreak has been dramatically exaggerated and is unjustified—unless you are a politician who owns stock in companies that will benefit from vaccine distribution.

It is worth noting that in 2005, soon after he was sworn in as the junior Senator from Illinois, Obama bought stock in a company that was developing a drug to treat the avian (bird) flu strain, H5N1. Two weeks after buying shares in the company, Obama pushed for federal spending to battle the disease. Not long after Obama bought his stock in AVI Biopharma it received a \$28 million federal contract. A few days after the announcement of the contract, the company’s stock shot up and Obama sold his shares... at a 73 per cent profit.

Obama’s daughters have not yet had swine flu vaccinations. Nor have I.

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