

FDA OKs DRUG FOR BREAST CANCER

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has approved the first immunotherapy drug for breast cancer. Swiss drugmaker Roche's Tecentriq was OK'd Friday for treating advanced triple-negative breast cancer, which accounts for about 15 percent of cases. It's to be given with chemotherapy, the standard treatment.

Mount Sinai breast cancer specialist Dr. Amy Tiersten in New York called it "tremendously exciting news."

Approved for two other cancers, Tecentriq works by boosting the immune system's ability to spot and kill cancer cells.

In a study of 900 women, the benefits were modest. Those who received Tecentriq plus chemo went two months longer on average without their cancer worsening compared with those on chemo alone. The combo caused nerve pain, nausea and other side effects.

Tecentriq costs about \$13,400 per month. — AP

Flu season might have peaked

But a nastier strain of the virus has officials concerned

The Associated Press

There's a strong chance this flu season has peaked, but health officials are watching a recent wave of illnesses from a nastier flu strain.

Flu was reported to be widespread in 48 states in the week of Feb. 25, down from 49 the week before, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Friday in its latest report on this winter's flu season. The federal agency's flu forecasters think there's a 90 percent chance the flu season has peaked.

But experts also are monitoring an increase in illnesses from a kind of flu virus that tends to cause more hospitalizations and deaths, especially in the elderly. It's not unusual

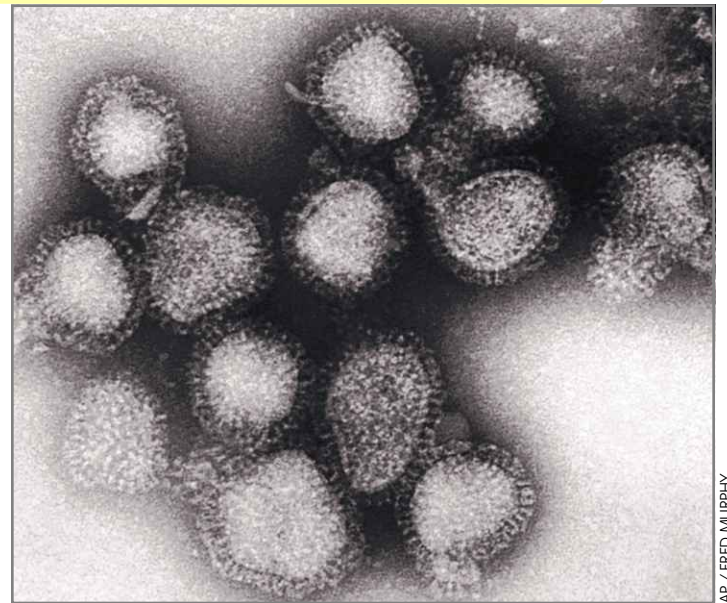
for several flu strains to spread around the country at the same time, but one kind usually predominates.

This season, a milder strain has been the most common cause of flu illnesses. But for the past two weeks, more illnesses have been tied to a strain that tends to cause more deaths.

The week of Feb. 25, about 60 percent of the flu virus samples tested were the more troublesome strain, known as Type A H3N2.

Uncertainty about what kind of H3N2 will be spreading later this year recently led the World Health Organization to postpone its decision on which strains should go into the flu vaccine for next season.

Last season, an estimated 80,000 Americans died of flu and its complications, the disease's highest death toll in at least four decades. In recent years, flu-related deaths have ranged from about 12,000 to 56,000, according to the CDC.



This microscope image from the CDC shows a group of H3N2 influenza A virus virions, which has caused a recent wave of illness.

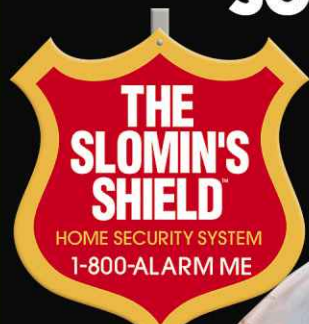
AP / FRED MURPHY

CDC officials estimate there have been somewhere around 20,000 to 30,000 flu-related deaths so far this winter.

They also think there have been around 300,000 flu-related hospitalizations and around 25 million flu illnesses.

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