Government Shutdown Paralyzes CDC Flu Monitoring

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With 80 to 85 percent of its staffers on furlough, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has seen its ability to monitor and respond to influenza crippled just as the flu season arrives, MedPage Today reports. While state health departments continue to gather flu surveillance data, they are not reporting it to the CDC, which is the only entity that keeps track of the bug on a national scale.

Without proper national surveillance data, health care workers will not have a sense of the geographic spread of the flu, nor will they know the precise severity of this year's epidemic. The government shutdown has also hampered the ability to detect if the flu vaccine is a good match for flu strains infecting particular communities, or if the flu has developed resistance to antiviral medications.

By February, the CDC must also come to a decision as to which strains of flu to include in next year's vaccine. The shutdown puts the agency behind in this effort, which could have international repercussions, considering the CDC's participation in the global response to the flu.

To read the MedPage Today story, click here.

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