Swine Flu Stigma in Mexico

May 7, 2009 By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.

I believe fear is what fuels stigma. Unfortunately, fresh evidence to support my belief is being seen in Mexico, according to The Associated Press. Mexicans are discriminating against their fellow citizens who have had or are suspected to have had H1N1 (swine flu).

From the AP article:

"Moises Bonilla spent five days struggling to breathe in a hospital ward he shared with others suspected of having swine flu. He watched the woman in the bed next to him die.

"Bonilla lived to tell his story -- a bold choice for swine flu survivors in Mexico, where neighbors have shunned the sick out of fear of contagion, even as the government protests foreign quarantines of its citizens. Most of the country's more than 1,000 confirmed survivors have remained anonymous ...

“Even healthy Mexicans have been the target of fear: Some Acapulco residents hurled stones last week at cars with Mexico City license plates, angry that anyone from the epicenter of the outbreak had ventured to their town.”

I wish I could say that we in the United States would behave differently, but I don’t think so.

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