



## The Geography of Science

### Lesson 2: Swine Flu: an over-reaction?

#### Key ideas:

- 1) Swine flu is a pandemic which began in Mexico and has spread throughout the world.
- 2) Some consider that the media has portrayed the pandemic in a way that has caused panic.
- 3) Swine flu has resulted in far fewer worldwide deaths than other diseases.

#### Starter activity:

*What is the worldwide distribution of the Swine Flu pandemic?*

Look at the Google Map of the Swine Flu outbreak at: [Google Maps](#) and type "2009 H1N1 Flu Outbreak Map."

#### Task:

Using Google Maps, write a description of the worldwide distribution of the swine flu pandemic. Alternatively students could answer the following questions:

1. Which three countries have been most affected by swine flu?
2. Which regions have been most affected by swine flu?
3. Which regions have been least affected by swine flu?
4. Does anything surprise you about the distribution of swine flu?

#### Main Activity:

*Swine Flu: balanced reporting?*

There are three activities in this section. The activities could be completed in their entirety which may need more than one lesson or a lesson and a homework, or you may prefer to complete a selection.

The general public in the UK learnt and gained further information about swine flu and its spread mainly through the media via television, newspapers and the internet. Some might argue that the general public reacted with alarm and panic due to the way the media portrayed the pandemic.

#### Task 1:

Aim: The main objective of this exercise is by examining a variety of media resources, students can decide whether the phrases, pictures and information used in these reports is likely to have caused public panic and to develop a more balanced perspective on the pandemic.

There are four news reports (two written and two videos). Depending on the ability of the group, students can work on this activity alone, in pairs or in groups. You may also wish all students to do one of the news reports or give different groups/students different reports and then feed back to the class.

To access the reports:

#### **News report 1:**

[The Independent](#) "Swine Flu could affect up to half the population"

**News report 2:**

[The Daily Mail](#) "NHS helplines swamped swine flu panic rises"

**News report 3:**

[YouTube](#): "UK update on swine flu".

**News report 4:**

[YouTube](#): "Swine flu: parents should not panic".

**Task 2:**

Once students have read/watched their report, they should fill in the table on the resource sheet entitled "Swine Flu through the media".

**Task 3:**

But how serious is/was Swine flu?

Having read/seen the news reports, it might seem that swine flu is/was an impending catastrophe. But how serious is/was it? Students look at the resource sheets entitled "Swine Flu in Perspective" and "Swine flu – it's all in the balance" and write a short news article to achieve a more balanced perspective on the Swine Flu pandemic.

**Plenary:**

Students look at the following statements and try to create a more balanced response:

- "The sudden rise in Swine flu may trigger a pandemic that could wipe out 120 million people, an expert warned" (The Metro, 22<sup>nd</sup> April, 2009).
- "Swine flu could kill 65,000 in the UK, warns chief medical officer" (The Guardian, 16<sup>th</sup> July, 2009).

**Extension:**

Create a short podcast or video using Moviemaker of your swine flu article. Include pictures, maps and interviews if appropriate.