

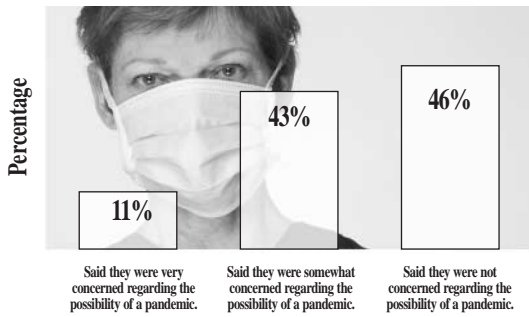
Poll STATION

With Linda Banister



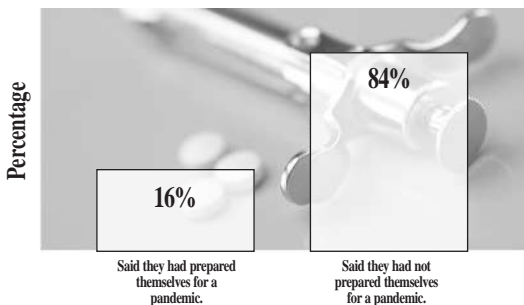
Even the casual news viewer cannot help but have seen recent stories about bird flu (avian influenza) and its spread through Asia, into Europe and Africa. Not long ago, SARS—Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome—assumed a prominent place in the headlines. While many people, including health professionals, are quite knowledgeable about these diseases and their prevalence, a large number of us rely on the mass media for insight. This month we asked Edmontonians for their thoughts regarding pandemics.

HOW CONCERNED ARE YOU ABOUT A POTENTIAL PANDEMIC?



First, survey participants were asked about their level of concern regarding the possibility of a pandemic developing in North America. Approximately one-tenth (11 percent) of respondents were very concerned, and 43 percent were somewhat concerned. Almost half (46 percent) of respondents were not concerned about a pandemic developing in North America.

HAVE YOU PREPARED FOR A PANDEMIC? HOW?



When respondents were asked if they had taken any steps to prepare themselves and their families for a possible pandemic, only 16 percent said they had, while 84 percent admitted they had not taken any preparatory steps.

Those who had undertaken some preparations identified a number of steps. Over half (56 percent) of this group said they had stocked emergency supplies like food, water, blankets and generators. Thirty-eight percent said their preparation included keeping themselves informed, while 19 percent had

received immunizations/vaccines, and 19 percent practiced safety procedures/survival training.

WHAT SHOULD GOVERNMENTS BE DOING TO PREPARE?

An overwhelming majority—92 percent—of survey participants felt it was very important (60 percent) or somewhat important (32 percent) that governments and government agencies be prepared for a possible pandemic. When asked what governments and their agencies can do to prepare for a pandemic, respondents provided numerous responses. Over one-quarter (28 percent) think governments and their agencies should stock medical supplies in a manner which allows quick access, and 20 percent indicated that additional research should be funded or undertaken.

HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW AND WHAT DO YOU WANT TO KNOW?

Respondents were queried about their level of knowledge regarding pandemics. One-quarter felt they were very well informed, while more than half (56 percent) felt they were somewhat informed. One-fifth (19 percent) said they were not at all informed.

Finally, survey participants were asked to identify the additional information they needed to be better prepared for a possible pandemic. While 30 percent were unsure, 26 percent were interested in getting information about emergency procedures/preparedness plans. Twenty-four percent wanted more information of all kinds, while 20 percent wanted to know the probability of a pandemic occurring here.

Linda Banister is a certified management consultant and the owner of Banister Research and Consulting Inc., a full service provider of market research and program evaluation services. If you have a question you would like included in the Edmontonians Poll, contact Linda at 780.451.4444 or e-mail at lbanner@edmontonians.com. For further information on the firm visit www.banister.ab.ca.