

Northland swine flu seems to be diminishing

NORTHLAND ADVOCATE
by Lindy Laird

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The number of swine flu cases being reported in Northland appears to be easing, health bosses say.

And, despite initial fears, the infection has not left the swathe of illness and social disruption pundits had earlier predicted, much to the relief of smaller or remote health services such as Hokianga Health Trust.

Two patients were admitted to

Rawene Hospital with swine flu for short-term stays in recent weeks, but there had generally been little impact on services, the trust's chief executive John Wigglesworth said.

The trust had not had to action its plans to mobilise health teams to visit flu-sick homes should the pandemic live up to earlier fears.

"We have had nurses out visiting flu patients but that is really a routine service. We were worried about sick people having to make

their own way to get treatment when it was probably safer for everyone if they stayed home.

This week the number of suspected swine flu cases needing medical help or advice appeared to be easing off, he said.

Nationwide, health authorities have noted the same trend.

Linda Holman, of Whangarei's Manaia Primary Health Organisation, said the daily reports from GP practices in Northland showed case numbers were easing.

"Yes, we're tracking downward, and we're tentatively saying 'yahoo'," Ms Holman said. "It's very reassuring to see it's a national trend."

But officials are warning people not to be complacent if their symptoms became worse, especially in the case of pregnant women and young children.

Deputy director of public health, Fran McGrath, said while for most people pandemic influenza (H1N1) was a mild to moder-

ate illness and people could generally care for themselves at home, it was important people with a more severe illness got medical advice.

The main group who should seek medical advice included adults and children with chronic respiratory, cardiovascular, hepatic, hematological, neurologic, neuromuscular or metabolic disorders, immunosuppression conditions or on renal replacement therapy.