

## **WRMC Plans for Possible Flu Pandemic**

Batesville, Ark – White River Medical Center was one of 8 hospitals in the region participating in regional flu pandemic drills on Thursday. The drill simulated a flu outbreak in the region and the increase in patients that might present to hospitals for evaluation and treatment. Other hospitals participating included; Stone County Medical Center, Fulton County Medical Center, Ozark Health Medical Center, Baxter Regional Medical Center, White County Medical Center, Harris Hospital and Baptist Health Heber Springs.

Drills are used to simulate events that if they occur, may require additional healthcare staff, additional medical supplies, etc. in order to effectively care for patients. Drills also test policies and procedures used to coordinate services with local and state authorities such as the Office of Emergency Services, Independence County Sheriff's office, Vital Link and others.

“Emergency preparedness drills are extremely important tools for the hospital,” said Tony Thompson, Associate Administrator for Ancillary Services and Incident Commander. “Drill scenarios change to respond to our current environment and potential emergency situations.”

Influenza pandemic is a global outbreak of disease that occurs when a new virus appears or emerges in the human population causing serious illness and then spreads easily from person to person worldwide. Past influenza pandemics have led to high levels of illness, death, social disruption and economic loss. An influenza pandemic is a rare but recurrent event. Three pandemics have occurred in the last century; the Spanish Flu in 1918-1919, the Asian Flu in 1957-1958 and the Hong Kong Flu in 1968-1969.

Health experts have been monitoring a new and extremely severe influenza virus for almost eight years. Global collaborative efforts with the Centers for Disease Control and the World Health Organization and state and local departments of public health pre-pandemic preparedness for Avian Flu are ongoing. Today's drill was a part of that continuing effort.