

**Commissioner Poonam Alaigh, M.D.**  
**Welcoming Remarks**  
**NJ Pandemic Influenza Summit**  
**April 9, 2010**

**(Margy Jahn, president of the New Jersey Health Officers Association, will introduce you.)**

Thank you, Margy. Good morning and welcome to New Jersey's sixth workshop that is part of our Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Summit.

I want to thank all of you for taking the time to participate in today's workshop, which will focus on evaluating New Jersey's response to H1N1 influenza and beginning the process of developing solutions to the challenges we all faced.

Thanks for the efforts of Dave Gruber and his staff along with the health officers of New Jersey for coordinating these valuable workshops.

I also want to commend and thank everyone for their hard work, commitment and dedication during the response to H1N1 influenza last spring and throughout the rest of 2009 and the 2010. Because of your efforts, New Jersey's response was coordinated and effective.

The hallmark of New Jersey's public health care system has always been to protect the health and safety of our residents and it has showed during our response to H1N1.

During New Jersey's H1N1 response in the spring and fall of 2009, I was sitting where you are now. I was looking for leadership from our public health agencies and our state leaders. What I experienced was a sense of inclusiveness – everybody was at the table and everyone's voice was heard as plans were developed.

Last July, when the federal government was encouraging states to conduct summits, New Jersey already had planned their summit – and not just one, but five summits were held throughout the summer and into September. Just another demonstration that New Jersey is a leader in preparedness.

This extensive and cooperative planning by all of you translated into an effective response in our state. Leaders from local and state government agencies in health, education, emergency preparedness as well as the private sector worked together to protect the health of our residents.

Last week, Dr. Anne Schuchat, Director for the National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases at the CDC, encouraged all states to share successful H1N1 practices with each other. Through the national response, there have been some innovative response activities – ones that helped to minimize illnesses and deaths. I am

confident that New Jersey has some excellent success stories. In a few minutes, we will hear about four of them.

It's important for us to continue to work together here today to not only share success stories but also to confront the challenges we all faced and craft solutions on how we can do better.

For the most part, H1N1 influenza has resulted in mild illness in New Jersey, although there have been deaths – as there are with any type of influenza virus. And we do know that influenza viruses are unpredictable and are susceptible to change at any time.

We are closely watching developments in some of the Southeastern states, where there has been a recent increase in influenza activity. Our state's public health professionals continue to monitor the virus for change in the severity and length of illness in our communities.

Our message that began in the fall remains the same today: If you have not got vaccinated for H1N1, take the time to do so now. Vaccine is safe; it is effective; and there is plenty available.

While the previous five workshops brought all our vital partners together for planning purposes, today we are here to evaluate how well we did and begin to formulate plans on overcoming some of the challenges we faced. This is an ambitious goal but one which is achievable.

Our approach this spring will be the same as last summer. We are bringing everyone together, acknowledging the challenges and brainstorming on the solution. I thank you for your continued hard work and dedication.

Thank you.