

# Don't worry about Ebola—but be very worried about flu

November 20 2014, by Bryan Goodchild And Sandra Gray

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Amidst fears about the Ebola virus, the current flu season is gaining steam. And many Americans, while completely safe from Ebola, are in danger of becoming seriously ill with a widespread, highly infectious and potentially deadly virus if they don't get protect themselves with an influenza vaccine.

"We do not think there is any potential for an outbreak of Ebola in the United States," said infectious disease specialist Robert Finberg, MD, chair and professor of medicine at UMass Medical School. "That there will be an outbreak of influenza in the United States is pretty much a certainty."

A seasonal flu epidemic occurs in the United States every single year. "Over the last decade there have been between about 4,000 and 50,000 deaths every season from influenza in the United States, and the number of hospitalizations runs from 50,000 to 500,000," Dr. Finberg noted.

In contrast, there have been two deaths from Ebola in the United States.

"Flu is much more dangerous and will cause much more death in the United States than Ebola," Finberg emphasized. "On the other hand, it is preventable. The flu vaccine is protective and is safe, and we recommend that you take it."

Provided by University of Massachusetts Medical School

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