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HOOK LAW CENTER

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Flu Breakthrough

by Maureen E. Hook, Ph.D.

Just when you thought you had taken care of everything and gotten your flu shot early in the fall to keep you healthy, comes some information about the flu shot's effectiveness this season. The news is not what you wanted to hear. This year's batch may not be as effective as in previous years. Apparently this year's dominant strain of flu is the result of a mutation, and the vaccine will not be able to address that strain, but it will protect against some of the other strains possibly coming our way. Experts are still advising children and older adults and other target groups to get the shot, but they're letting us know it won't be as effective as in the past.

There is some good news to report, however, about flu and the ability of experts to predict when and where it will hit certain areas. Doctors of infectious disease at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health came up with a way to pinpoint flu outbreaks. The Columbia team won a contest sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) aptly named "Predict the Influenza Season Challenge." What they did was to create a mathematical formula used in weather forecasting and then applied it to flu prediction. In essence, it was the first time there was a scientific basis in predicting flu outbreaks before they happened, instead of commenting after the fact. Time will tell how accurate their predictions are. For instance, they are predicting that the flu will peak in New York City during the week of January 10th. Atlanta will get hit around December 27th, and Chicago's worst period will be the week of December 20th.

If you are interested in reading more on this subject, the Columbia team has created a website that includes an interactive map of the United States. You can click on your area and find out how severe they are forecasting the outbreak to be. Incidence numbers are also included. Jeffrey Shaman, on the Columbia U. team, comments " It may help parents decide when to schedule their children's play dates or it may also help remind people to think about getting vaccinated for influenza." (<http://www.mailman.columbia.edu/academic-departments/environmental-health/climate-health-program/environmental-predictors-seasonal-i>) There also may be a real practical advantage to having this knowledge--forewarned medical facilities can schedule more staff for the outbreak period, and schools will have more information about whether to close school. Stay tuned as the flu season unfolds.

(http://www.cnn.com/2014/12/10/health/flu-prediction-model/index.html?hpt=hp_t2)



Lion Guardians

Hook Law Center: Kit Kat, I've heard that the number of lions has declined in Africa. Is that true?

Kit Kat: Unfortunately, that's true. However, thanks to a new program, their numbers are starting to rebound. It's all due to Leela Hazzah who grew up in Egypt. She used to love sleeping on the rooftop of her home and listening to the lions roaring. But that can no longer happen in Egypt, because lions are extinct there. The total population of lions in Africa hovers around 30,000, a steep decline from the 1950s when they numbered close to half a million. Early on, she resolved to change the situation. Today, she has a doctorate in environmental studies, and she works with the Massai tribe to act as lion protectors in East Africa. She began an organization called "Lion Guardians" in 2007. 65 people are employed and are paid \$100 per month, a full-time job in that part of the world.

Before starting her organization, she lived among the Massai for a year. She wanted to understand the relationship between the tribe and the lion. Killing lions had become a rite of passage for young males. Lions also were threatening the tribe's livestock, which was not only a food source, but used as money in a barter economy. To change this pattern, she began educating the community about the benefits of lions--contributors to the culture of Africa and a significant attraction for the tourist industry. She also teaches guardians to read and write. That ability gives them status. If the guardian hears about a lion hunt, he acts to stop it, and educates the hunters about the contributions of the lion to the area. The guardians also help their fellow tribesmen strengthen their corrals to keep the lion out. When livestock become lost, they are there to help. The result is a true success. Lion killing in that area has been reduced tremendously. Hazzah says, "When I first moved here, I never heard lions roaring. But now I hear lions roaring all the time." If you want to help in the effort to save the lions or just learn more, visit her website at www.lionguardians.org. (Meghan Dunn, "Transforming lion killers into 'Lion Guardians,' www.cnn.com, December 9, 2014 or http://www.cnn.com/2014/07/24/world/cnnheroes-hazzah/index.html?hpt=hp_c2)



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Upcoming Events

- **January 22, 2015** – Andrew Hook will be speaking to the Portsmouth Community Criminal Justice Board regarding how the aging population may affect the court system.
- **January 29 – 31, 2015** - Andrew Hook will attend the NAELA Summit in Newport Beach, California.
- **February 3, 2015** – Andrew Hook will be speaking at King’s Grant House regarding Long-term Care Insurance.
- **February 7, 2015** – Shannon Laymon-Pecoraro will be speaking to the Down Syndrome Association of Hampton Roads’ Baby Play Group.
- **February 10, 2015** – Andrew Hook will be teaching a continuing legal education seminar to personal injury attorneys on “Protecting Your Client’s Settlement Using Trusts.”
- **February 20-21, 2015** – Andrew Hook will be speaking on Managing a Small Law Firm at the 2015 VAELA UnProgram in Charlottesville, VA.
- **August 12, 2015** - Andrew Hook will be speaking to a group at Maryview Hospital in Portsmouth, Virginia.
- **August 21, 2015** - Andrew Hook will be speaking to a group at DePaul Hospital in Norfolk, Virginia.
- **August 27, 2015** - Andrew Hook will be speaking to a group at Mary Immaculate Hospital in Newport News, Virginia.



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