

! COVID-19: CDC Museum Closed to the Public

Due to ongoing concerns about the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), the David J. Sencer CDC Museum is closed to the public and will remain closed as we continue to assess and monitor developments. All CDC Museum tours are canceled until further notice.

This decision is being made out of an abundance of caution and based upon the guidance of the CDC regarding social distancing and the elimination of large gatherings.

Please continue to check our website and social media accounts for additional updates.



1976 Swine Flu Vaccination Program

Take care of kids?
OF PROTECTION.
the Flu Shot.

Flu FIGHTER

LESSONS LEARNED
1976 SWINE FLU
VACCINATION PROGRAM

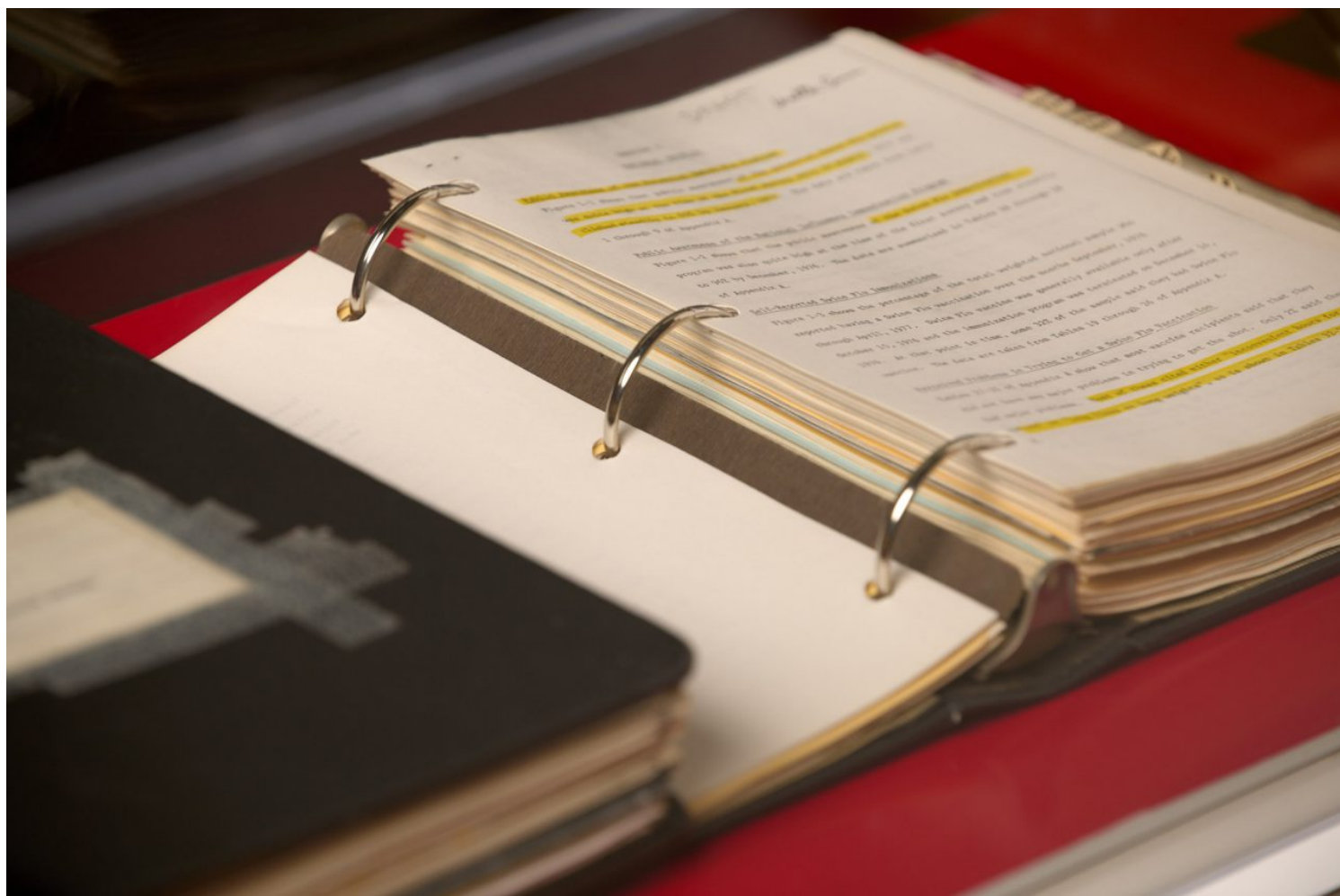
The story of the swine flu vaccination program in 1976—CDC’s massive national campaign in response to a possible flu pandemic—provides us many lessons today. By understanding how decisions were made to proceed with the campaign, how risks were weighed, and how the public, media, and industry responded has helped us prepare for pandemics in this century.

Stacks of swine flu vaccine campaign distribution, 1976

Flu vaccine, 1976

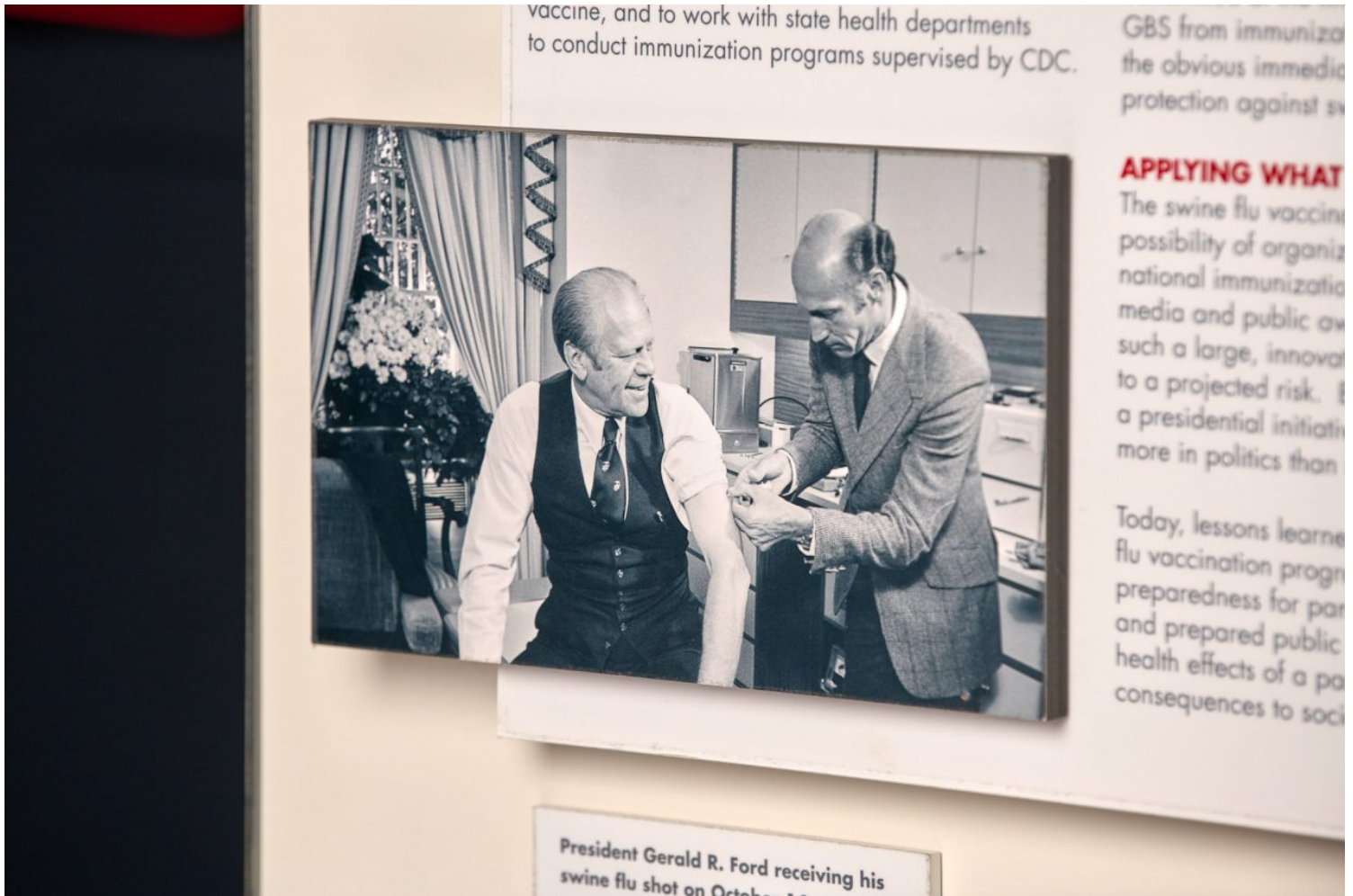
H1N1

In addition to the discovery of the Ebola Fever and Legionnaires' Disease pathogens, another major disease event in 1976 was [Swine flu](#). Earlier that year, the New Jersey State Health Department asked CDC to identify an illness spreading at Fort Dix Army Base. An influenza-like illness affecting over 200 recruits had caused one death. CDC tested throat cultures sent from the base and found in four of the samples the virus believed at the time to be H1N1, the [1918-19 flu pandemic pathogen](#). H1N1, or as it is more commonly known, swine flu, is a strain commonly found in pigs. In 1918, the virus mutated to infect humans, killing 500,000 people in the U.S. and more than 20 million worldwide. Surveillance at Fort Dix suggested human-to-human transmission, indicating that the illness could spread rapidly in the U.S.



Making the Case to Congress

CDC scientists evaluated the possibility of a new H1N1 pandemic and presented the information to the U.S. Congress. Shown here are two thick books filled with typed data and information, highlighted points, and hand-jotted notes used by the scientists during their testimonies to Congress about the outbreak. As a result, President Gerald Ford asked Congress for funds to vaccinate everyone in the United States.



A photograph of President Ford getting his shot is also on display, encouraging Americans to get vaccinated.



Lessons Learned




The campaign faced several challenges. First, the **Fort Dix strain** grew poorly in chicken eggs, producing less vaccine than anticipated. Second, the government quickly agreed to protect manufacturers from claims in case the vaccine had harmful reactions. As a result, a public belief that “there’s something wrong with this vaccine,” emerged. A third blow to the vaccination campaign was **Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS)**, a rare, usually reversible but occasionally fatal form of paralysis. Although there are always GBS cases in the population, people who had received the vaccine were observed to have a slightly increased risk of developing GBS.

The program had mixed outcomes. The national vaccination program set an immunization record by vaccinating nearly 43 million Americans in the first 10-week period, proving that an emergency program like this was possible. Unfortunately, public health officials halted the program before completion. Ultimately, understanding how decisions were made during this program; how risks were weighed; and how the public, media, and industry responded helps CDC prepare for pandemics and other future public health emergencies.

Enrichment Modules


SEE

Take a closer look:

- Learn more about [swine flu in pigs](#), [swine flu in humans](#), and CDC's [global prevention and control efforts](#). If you're still curious, read more about [zoonotic flu viruses](#) currently being studied (and why).
- How does swine flu spread between pigs and people? Check out this [infographic](#)  , which is also available en [Español](#)  .
- Curious about how influenza can morph over time to infect more humans or animals? Learn all about the basics of [antigenic drift and shift](#).
- Learn more about how [pandemic flu differs from seasonal flu](#).
- Explore the [swine flu virus](#) up close with a transmission electron microscope image.
- Learn [how deadly strains of the virus arise](#)  .

HEAR

From the source:

- Read stories from survivors and families and friends of non-survivors in CDC's [Pandemic Influenza Storybook](#).
- How do influenza viruses and art collide? Check out this *Emerging Infectious Diseases* issue exploring [influenza A viruses through art](#) and art that arose from [great pandemics of the virus](#).
- Get up-to-date information from the [Weekly U.S. Influenza Surveillance Report](#).
- Watch this [Ted-Ed video](#)  explaining how viruses jump from animals to humans.

REFLECT

Then and now:

- What did we learn from the 1976 Swine Flu Vaccination Program? Read all about it in this issue of [Emerging Infectious Diseases](#).
- Explore the [timeline](#) of discovery and major breakthroughs in our understanding of the influenza virus.
- How has CDC's vaccination campaign affected the spread of influenza activity? Compare the spread of the virus over [multiple flu seasons](#) with these maps.
- What made the 1918 flu so deadly? Read the [whole story](#) and what we can learn moving forward.

DO

Give it a try:

- Check out CDC's [The Junior Disease Detectives: Operation Outbreak](#) graphic novel.
- How much do you know about influenza? Explore prevention tips, key facts, and shareable videos with [CDC's Disease of the Week influenza feature](#), then try your hand at a short quiz.
- 3D print a deconstructable influenza virion at home with [National Institutes of Health 3D Print Exchange](#) [↗](#) .
- Interested in learning more about influenza? Find self-study resources about [influenza and vaccination](#).
- Still curious? Take a deep dive into epidemiology and prevention of influenza in [CDC's Pink Book](#).

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Content source: [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)