



MEDIA RELEASE MEDIA RELEASE MEDIA RELEASE



The Medical Journal of Australia

Established 1914 • Journal of the Australian Medical Association

eMJA

eMJA RAPID ONLINE PUBLICATION

AVIAN FLU PANDEMIC: AUSTRALIA NEEDS GENERIC DRUGS FOR STOCKPILE

EMBARGOED UNTIL 1.00 AM WEDNESDAY 26 OCTOBER 2005

If an avian influenza pandemic reaches Australia, our antiviral stockpile will be inadequate unless the government authorises local manufacture of generic drugs, says a report to be released in an electronic version of the *Medical Journal of Australia* on Wednesday 26 October 2005.

Supply of the antivirals is controlled by the European-based patent owners, preventing competition in manufacture and reducing global supply and affordability, said Australian National University researchers Dr Buddhima Lokuge and Professor Peter Drahos.

Dr Lokuge, a Visiting Fellow at the Medical School and Professor Drahos, Director of the Centre for Governance of Knowledge and Development, are calling for the Australian Government to consider overcoming patent barriers by issuing a compulsory licence. Generic drugs could then be manufactured locally and any surplus exported to neighbouring high risk countries. Generic antivirals could also be imported if necessary.

“There are health, economic and ethical arguments for such a licence to be issued,” said Dr Lokuge. Given that “Australian taxpayers helped to fund the research that led to the discovery of these antivirals, questions arise if a licence for generic medicines is not issued and inadequate supplies have to be rationed” through a confidential priority list.

“We also have an opportunity and responsibility to support our neighbours in the Asian region in establishing pandemic stockpiles in a timely and affordable manner” said Professor Drahos.

Pandemics, antiviral stockpiles and biosecurity in Australia: what about the generic option?

Lokuge B, Drahos P and Neville W.

[URL] http://www.mja.com.au/public/issues/183_11_051205/lok10852.html

A copy of the article will be available from 1.00AM WEDNESDAY 26 OCTOBER 2005 on the MJA website (www.mja.com.au).

To receive email alerts whenever new issues of the eMJA or rapid on-line publications appear, register on-line at <http://www.mja.com.au/registration/register.html>

The *Medical Journal of Australia* is a publication of the Australian Medical Association.

CONTACT	Dr Buddhima Lokuge	02 6125 6056 / 0422 988 659
	Professor Peter Drahos	02 6125 4241/ 0437 788 016
	Judith TOKLEY, AMA Public Affairs,	0408 824 306 / 02 6270 5471