

Description of Event

The Global Virus Network (GVN), a coalition of the world's leading medical virologists working together to prevent illness and death from viral disease, will host a webinar for business leaders on Thursday, February 12, 2015 at 1pm EST to discuss this year's severe and ongoing seasonal influenza epidemic. Renowned flu researcher and GVN Center of Excellence Director Dr. Peter Palese of the Mount Sinai Icahn School of Medicine will update participants on the status of the annual flu epidemic; explain how the annual flu vaccine became mismatched to the strains of flu causing the majority of illnesses this year; describe the latest in the efforts to develop a universal flu vaccine against all influenza strains that would obviate the need for annual vaccines; and answer questions about influenza's impact on businesses. The webinar is open to the public and is a part of an ongoing series of discussions on key viral threats to the private sector presented under the auspices of GVN's Business Leadership Council.

Influenza is one of the leading causes of illness-related workplace absences, and it infects between 5-15% of the world's population each year. In the United States alone, experts estimate that the annual flu is responsible for an average of nearly 111 million missed workdays and US\$7 billion in economic losses in lost productivity. This year's seasonal flu epidemic has been particularly severe, reaching epidemic levels across the United States and Europe earlier in the season and causing an increased number of hospitalizations.

Agenda:

During the webinar on Thursday, February 12, 2015 at 1pm EST, Dr. Palese was providing updated information on this year's flu epidemic and address key questions for business leaders such as:

- Why has this year's flu season been more severe than previous years?
- Why was the annual flu shot less effective this year?
- Should companies still encourage employees to get the annual flu shot even though it was less effective this year?
- What are the best ways to minimize the impact of flu on communities and workforces?
- What is a "universal" flu vaccine, how would it be different from the current annual flu vaccine, and why should businesses care?

About the Expert:

Dr. Peter Palese, PhD, is the Horace W. Goldsmith Professor and Chair of Microbiology, Professor of Medicine, and Director of the GVN Center of Excellence at the Mount Sinai Icahn School of Medicine. Dr. Palese has more than 270 scientific publications that include research on the replication of RNA-containing viruses with a special emphasis on influenza viruses, which are negative-strand RNA viruses.

He established the first genetic maps for influenza A, B, and C viruses, identified the function of several viral genes, and defined the mechanism of neuraminidase inhibitors (which are now FDA-approved antivirals). Dr. Palese pioneered the field of reverse genetics for negative-strand RNA viruses, a revolutionary technique that is crucial for the study of the structure/function relationships of viral genes, for investigation of viral pathogenicity, and for development and manufacture of novel vaccines.

Reverse genetics allowed Dr. Palese and his colleagues to reconstruct and study the pathogenicity of the highly virulent but extinct 1918 pandemic influenza virus also known as the “Spanish flu.” Dr. Palese was elected to the National Academy of Sciences in 2000 for his seminal studies on influenza viruses.

He is also a member of the German Academy of Sciences, a corresponding member of the Austrian Academy of Sciences and serves on the editorial board for a number of prominent scientific journals. Dr. Palese earned a PhD in chemistry from the University of Vienna in Austria in 1969, and remained at the university to pursue a master's degree in pharmaceutical science. Dr. Palese joined the faculty at Mount Sinai in 1971 as an Assistant Professor of Microbiology and rose through the ranks, becoming Chair of the Department of Microbiology in 1987.