

Many Md. health staff would flee if flu

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Some 46.2 percent of Maryland public health workers say they likely would not report for work if there were a pandemic flu outbreak, a study concludes.

Those who would stay home rather than report to their public health jobs are primarily clerical and support staff members who do not consider their roles crucial in fighting a flu outbreak, the study by John Hopkins and Ben-Gurion universities concludes.

"The people who answer the telephones are on the front lines of risk communication," study co-author Daniel Barnett told USA Today.

Health officials need to make it clear that all employees would be needed during such a public crisis, researchers said.

The study of 308 public health workers in Maryland will be expanded to other areas of the United States, the team said.

The study was published in the online journal BMC Public Health.

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