

The Yearly Flu Plague

By Caroline Jenner

Somehow each year after the holidays, as students are getting back to school, there is a flu outbreak. This year, the epidemic was much more sizable and affected much of Chapman's campus. The illness, either as the stomach flu or the respiratory flu, is spread easily through normal avenues of contact. It manifests itself as a severe cold complete with sneezing, dizziness, body aches, congestion, chills, and stomach pain and cramps. Throughout the first few days of school, students, many with travel-worn bodies, greet their friends they've missed and prepare to get back into the swing of the semester. A large contributing factor to the flu outbreak on Chapman's campus is sorority recruitment. During the weekend leading up to the first day of Spring Semester, an active sorority member could shake hands with or hug as many as seventyfive new girls, never knowing the chances of each girl spreading the flu. Last year, the sickness dominated the first week of spring semester for the majority of girls in Greek-affiliated chapters on Chapman's campus.

The influenza virus causes such widespread damage because there are several strains that can be caught and spread. According to the Los Angeles Daily News, there have been over 160 deaths from the flu or flu-related complications in Los Angeles alone. These complications can include pneumonia, seizures, and a prolonged illness. The numbers all over California rose throughout February and March. The director of the Acute Communicable Disease Control stated that "it is too early to say that we have 'peaked,' as influenza is complicated and multiple strains can be circulating in a community" but that the number of cases has declined in the past few weeks so there is a lot of hope that it is headed towards the end of the epidemic. The flu season has been said to be almost as deadly as the 2009 pandemic, which caused over 500 casualties in California adults.

Often, the first few weeks of school only prolong the illness. The stress and exhaustion of getting back into the routine of school can have its effect on students and can leave them susceptible to a longer flu or can allow the virus to start. The CDC encourages those who come in contact with several people each day, as students do, to get a flu vaccine, wash hands with hot water and soap, and get enough rest and hydration each day to keep the body healthy. The flu is an easily spread illness that is also fairly simple to guard against with measures. The CDC claims that three out of the four strains of influenza can be prevented almost completely with the vaccine available, but the fourth strain is less likely to be stopped. The flu is an ever-growing virus that can kill hundreds each year, yet there are also measures to avoid catching it, precautions that should be taken by anyone who has access to them.