Determinants of Support for Government Actions in a Flu Pandemic

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Background

- When, not if: flu pandemics are cyclical
- H5N1 (Avian flu) similar to 1918 strain that killed 50 million worldwide (www.pandemicflu.gov)
  - 30% of population likely ill
  - U.S. death toll: 800 times 9/11
- U.S. has spent more than $7.1 billion toward preparedness (Morse, Garwin, & Olsiewski, 2006)

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Importance of Research

- Federal strategy for pandemic flu: (www.pandemicflu.gov)
  - Isolation or quarantine
  - Closing schools, stores and places of worship
  - Closing borders, airports & limiting U.S. travel
  - Home care instead of hospital care
  - Rationing of vaccine & medicine stockpiles
- Compliance requires public support of policies (McEntire & Myers, 2004)

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Learning Objectives

- To assess to what extent people support various government actions in a flu pandemic

- To identify what factors are associated with support for probable government actions in a flu pandemic

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Method

- 15-minute statewide phone survey conducted July and August 2006
- 1602 participants (1,302 RDD + 300 Hispanic oversample)
- Response rate = 40.5% (CASRO)
- Weighted by race, gender, age
- Measures: DV (10 support for government action items), IV (demographics, orientations, urban/rural, risk perception, knowledge, index of trust in government)

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Support for Government Actions

High levels of support

- Border closing (81.7%)
- Quarantine (80.9%)
- Vaccine distributions at public places (80.6%)
- Encourage people to work at home/not go to work (74.1%)
- Using the National Guard/police to prevent movement (70.5%)

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Support for Government Actions

- Moderate levels of support
  - Home health care to family members versus going to hospital (69.4%)
  - Public school closings (67.7%)
  - Limiting public transportation (65.7%)
  - Setting priorities for vaccine distribution (60.8%)
- Low levels of support
  - Offering investigational drugs (39.6%)

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Who Supports?

Delivering Health Care/Resources

	Offer drugs at a public location	Health care at home	Set priorities for vaccine	Offer not-fully approved drugs
Income	**+**		**+**	**+**
Educ	**+**		**+**	**+**
Age		**+**		
Gender	**M < F**			
Race		**B <W**		**B <W**
Rural	**R < U**		**R < U**	**R < U**

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Who Supports?

Restricting Movement

	Quaran -tine	Not go to work	Police' prevent move	Closing border	Closing Schools/ stores	Closing transport
Income	+	+		+		+
Educ		+				+
Age		+		+	+	
Gender	M < F		M < F		M < F	M < F
Race	B <W	B <W		B <W	B <W	B <W
Rural /Urban		R < U			R < U	

Factors associated with support for government action

- Trust: most consistent across government actions
- Knowledge:
  - Health care at home
  - Quarantine
- Risk Perception:
  - Susceptibility: encourage people not to go to work
- Demographics: income level, gender

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Discussions/Implications

- Trust seems to be a robust determinant of support for government actions
- People may have different levels of support for different kinds of government actions
- Governmental risk communicators need:
  - To build an understanding of investigational new drugs prior to any need to use them on a large scale
  - To reinforce the support for other controversial actions while recognizing that some of this support may erode when it impacts everyday life
  - To build trust in government, especially among vulnerable and minority populations

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Trust in Government's Ability to Handle a Flu Pandemic

Types of Trust	Yes
General Trust in Government	50.5%
Confidence	48.1%
Openness	55.6%
Benevolence	60.3%
Competence	56.7%

APPENDIX

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Awareness and Knowledge of Flu Pandemics

Georgians' Knowledge about Flu Pandemics	**Correct**
Bird flu and a flu pandemic are not necessarily the same thing (*Correct answer is "true"*)	54.0%
There is now a vaccine to protect people from getting bird flu (*Correct answer is "false"*)	57.7%
Contact with a person with bird flu will give you bird flu. (*Correct answer is "true"*)*	34.0%
It is possible that pets such as cats can get bird flu (*Correct answer is "true"*)	51.8%
Taking medicine will protect you from getting pandemic flu (*Correct answer is "false"*)	62.2%

*deleted for further analysis

APPENDIX

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