

Swine flu victim sought help too late

by UPI

OAXACA, Mexico -- The woman who became Mexico's first swine flu fatality spent more than a week in bed before seeking medical attention, health officials say.

By the time Adela Maria Gutierrez arrived at Oaxaca's General Hospital she was barely able to breath and her extremities were blue from lack of oxygen, The New York Times reported Friday.

"People wait too long to go to doctors," says Dr. Marcelo Noguera, Mexico's undersecretary of health for the state of Oaxaca.

Noguera said the Gutierrez case underscores a problem in Mexico.

"If we can treat a disease like this early, we can stay ahead," he said.

Epidemiologists are still puzzled by the virus, its origins and modes of transmissions but all agree that prompt medical attention is crucial to treating it.

Mexico's public health budget is about 3 percent of its gross domestic product, well below the rate in developed countries, says the World Bank.

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