Professor's Briefing Regarding Influenza A

So, now we come to viruses. We know that copper is very good against bacteria and fungi, so what about Influenza A? The world has suffered pandemics of influenza now for over hundred years, and some people are calling the very latest variety Swine flu, because it was first discovered and evolve from affected pigs in Mexico. We have been looking at the H1N1 flu, and we find that the flu will survive very well on stainless steel but dies very rapidly on copper. This is very important because we recognised that we need multiple barriers to protect against infection, especially when it takes a long time to develop a vaccine. So, we think that copper will be very important in providing a barrier to prevent transmission of influenza. We need to buy time to allow other scientists to develop a vaccine. We know that vaccines, even fast tracks, take at least 6 months, sometimes a year, to make. So, how could we delay the spread of an infection until the vaccine is made? Copper offers that potential.

Influenza is spread, people believe, in the air because people cough and sneeze, and that is one reason why many people wear face masks. But the virus in the air settles onto surfaces and people touch those surfaces. Other scientists show that one contaminated hand can contaminate at least 7 other surfaces before the hand is washed. It is recommended, particularly during a flu epidemic or pandemic, that people wash their hands very often, but people do not follow this advice. The problem then is that the contaminated hands can touch food which you eat, or people touching their faces during the day. The potential benefits of using face-masks are consequently very limited. In fact, it is probably more important to wash hands, or better still, keep touch surfaces clean.

Copper gives us the important ability to control contamination of surfaces. This is why we talk about this extra prevention barrier, particularly when people do not wash their hands enough. We hope that, in future, society will tend to use more copper and copper alloys in, for example, door handles, push plates and taps in public buildings, and many other examples of touch surfaces, such as tables.