

# **JIM C – HEALTH TERMS**

## **MONDAY - 05/04/2009**

**Transmission of swine influenza virus from pigs to humans is not common, and consumption of pork does not pose a high risk.**

### **HOW DID THE TERM “*INFLUENZA*” ORIGINATE?**

***Definition:* *In·flu·en·za* (aka grippe) – defined as an acute contagious viral infection characterized by inflammation of the respiratory tract and by fever, chills, muscular pain, and prostration.**

***Origin:* 1743, borrowed during an outbreak of the disease in Europe, from Italian *influenza* "influenza, epidemic," originally "visitation, influence (of the stars)," from Medieval Latin *influential*. Used in Italian for diseases since at least 1504 (cf. *influenza di febbre scarlattina* "scarlet fever") on notion of astral or occult influence. The 1743 outbreak began in Italy.**

**The Medieval Latin “*influentia*” is based on “*fluere*” (to flow) - a fluid or emanation given off by certain stars that governed human affairs. “Disaster” comes from the same sort of ancient belief in the calamitous influence of evil (“dis”) stars (“astra”).**

**Known originally as “*influenza di catarro*” (catarrh epidemic), the illness came to be called simply “*influenza*.”**

**Conventional Wisdom: Influenza = Contagious respiratory virus**

**Moment of Zen: Swine flu may be no worse than avian (bird) flu.**