



The World Health Organisation on Monday conceded shortcomings in its handling of the H1N1 swine flu pandemic, including a failure to communicate uncertainties about the new virus as it swept around the globe.

Keiji Fukuda, the WHO's top influenza expert, said the U.N. agency's six-phase system for declaring a pandemic had sown confusion about the flu bug which was ultimately not as deadly as the widely-feared avian influenza.

"The reality is there is a huge amount of uncertainty (in a pandemic). I think we did not convey the uncertainty. That was interpreted by many as a non-transparent process," Fukuda said.

He was addressing a three-day meeting of 29 external flu experts called to review WHO's handling of the first influenza pandemic in 40 years. Critics have said the WHO created panic about the swine flu virus, which turned out to be moderate in its effect, and caused governments to stockpile vaccines which went unused.

Some questioned its links to the pharmaceutical industry after companies like GlaxoSmithKline and Sanofi-Aventis made big profits from producing H1N1 vaccine.

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