The H3N2 virus has dominated this year’s flu season, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). H3N2 was one of the four viruses that this season’s flu vaccine was developed to protect against. However, the virus apparently mutated substantially following the vaccine’s development. As a result, the vaccine provides only partial protection. Patients, particularly the very old or very young or those with another chronic or debilitating disease, are getting sicker than they might in an average year. That accounts for the rise in the death toll this flu season.

With millions of people flying between countries every day, viruses can spread rapidly around the world. So, whether you are working in an Outrigger property or office in the United States, Guam, Fiji, Australia, Thailand, Maldives or Mauritius, if you have not yet been vaccinated for flu this season, I urge you to get a flu shot as soon as possible. If you do come down with flu-like symptoms, seek medical help promptly. If your physician agrees, immediately start taking a drug such as Tamiflu (oseltamivir) or Relenza (zanamivir). They are both in the class of drugs known as neuraminidase inhibitors, which are thought to prevent and reduce symptoms of flu by stopping the spread of the influenza virus inside the body.

Care for yourself. Care for your co-workers. Care for members of your family. Prevent the spread of flu viruses by washing your hands frequently, particularly before eating. Avoid crowded situations where coughing or sneezing can fill the air with droplets containing flu viruses.

With care, caution and luck, we will all get through this year’s flu cycle and then once again be able to focus on all the things we’d much rather be doing and thinking about.