

Health **FAX**

pH1N1 Prevalence and Epidemiology in Simcoe Muskoka

Attention: **All Physicians**
Date: October 26, 2009

A message from the Medical Officer of Health

There are an increasing number of lab-confirmed cases of pH1N1 and influenza-like illness (ILI) reported in the last couple of weeks in the Simcoe-Muskoka area. The second wave has begun here and according to our surveillance data, the pH1N1 activity here right now seems to be relatively low compared to most of the province. The percent of positive H1N1 nasopharyngeal (NP) swabs by PCR done for the week ending Oct 17th was 4.5% vs. the provincial average of 16%. This is despite our area doing the 4th most NP swabs out of 36 health unit areas. In particular, the emergency departments in Bracebridge and Huntsville over this past weekend of the 24th and 25th have reported an increased number of lab-confirmed cases. The highest percent positives in the province are in Hamilton, Middlesex-London and Northern Ontario among other areas where it ranges from 20% to 62.5%.

However, there remain a number of weeks at minimum before this wave is over, so please prepare your surge capacity. In other jurisdictions that are very hard hit, the large increase occurred within days.

Please take into account the epidemiological information when using the clinical guidance documents, as the H1N1 prevalence in your community, along with the severity of symptoms and co-morbidities of your patient does affect the positive predictive value of the ILI clinical definition, As always, use your clinical judgment when you use the guidance documents.

Some hypothesized reasons for this current differential in prevalence are that areas that were not as hard hit in the first wave have more susceptible individuals, and now are getting lots of infections. Cities where there are large universities where lots of students are from out of town and live on campus or together may provide the virus an easier way to spread because of close contact. Many universities were already on summer break during the first wave.

Let's hope our area will be relatively spared vs. the rest of the province while we immunize the population. **We are hopeful that the immunization campaign will blunt the second wave for us. For more information on immunization, please go to our website specifically on influenza vaccines at <http://www.smdhu.org/Promos/HumanSwineFlu/HealthCareProviders/InfluenzaVaccination.aspx>**

For access to the MOHTLC guidance documents on the diagnosis, testing and treatment of pH1N1, go to <http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/ccom/flu/h1n1/pro/>

Sincerely,

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