

Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 Influenza A Situation Update for Partners

Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit

November 6, 2009

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The influx of information from federal, provincial and local levels about pH1N1 surveillance, vaccine distribution, supply and priority groups has prompted us to provide an update this week. We streamlined this communication to address key information related to pH1N1 surveillance, pH1N1 vaccine and flu assessment centres.

You will find a link to the [previous biweekly updates](#) on our website. We will continue to work with and communicate to partners through regular channels to support ongoing planning and updates. If you have questions please contact your regular liaison at the health unit or call *Your Health Connection* at 721-7520 or 1 877-721-7520.

Sincerely,

Dr. Charles Gardner
Medical Officer of Health

Surveillance

Simcoe Muskoka is now experiencing localized influenza activity. We have one active influenza outbreak in a long-term care home; this is our first pH1N1 outbreak since the five summer camp outbreaks we had back in July. We have recently seen a large increase in the number of reports of lab-confirmed cases of pH1N1 and influenza-like illness (ILI) reported from a variety of health care and community settings. Local Emergency Departments are reporting a 30 to 50 per cent increase in visits related to ILI when compared with the previous year. We have also seen a sharp increase in the number of schools reporting absenteeism of 10 per cent or more. Last week, approximately one quarter of schools reported student absenteeism above 10 per cent for at least one day that week.

Many areas of the province appear to be nearing or reaching the peak of the second wave of the pandemic. Our local surveillance data indicates that we may be one to two weeks behind some of the earlier-affected areas. In Ontario, the per cent of influenza tests positive for pH1N1 last week was 33 per cent, which was lower than the 45 per cent positive observed in the previous week. The per cent of influenza laboratory tests that were positive for pH1N1 in Simcoe Muskoka increased for the fifth consecutive week last week and now stand at 29 per cent, which is up from 21 per cent from the previous week. This level was very close to the provincial average, but still lower than several hard hit jurisdictions where the rate of positive influenza tests was near or above 50 per cent. The majority of the reports that the health unit has received to date indicates relatively mild illness; however, hospital admissions for influenza have increased recently as would be expected with the overall increase in influenza activity in our area.

pH1N1 Vaccine

Adjuvanted Vaccine Supply

Last Friday (October 30th), all local public health units in Ontario were notified that the expected supply of adjuvanted vaccine for pH1N1 would not be available due to manufacturing delays. It is hoped that a further amount will be received next week but likely only a fraction of the amount requested. There is no specific date when the full supply will be delivered, although the Chief Medical Officer of Health for Ontario (CMOH) has indicated all willing Ontario residents will be vaccinated before the end of December.

The CMOH has issued a **provincial directive that currently available vaccine be reserved exclusively for those Ontario residents in Sequence 1**. As a reminder, Sequence 1 for pH1N1 vaccine includes:

- People with chronic medical conditions* under the age of 65
- Healthy children from six months to five years old
- Household contacts and care providers of persons at high risk who cannot be immunized or may not respond to vaccines (including those caring for infants under 6 months old)
- Health care workers involved in pandemic response or who deliver essential services *Please note* that through discussion with the CMOH it has been clarified that this category includes firefighters who provide, as a regular part of their work, emergency health service functions within their community.
- People living in remote communities
- Pregnant women (note: unadjuvanted pH1N1 vaccine is now available, see below)

Adjuvanted Vaccine Distribution

Distribution of pH1N1 vaccine to Sequence 1 people has occurred in Simcoe Muskoka through a number of mechanisms.

During the first week of vaccine delivery, the vaccine was available through participating primary care physicians as they were deemed most appropriate to identify and serve Sequence 1 individuals. Hospitals also participated in vaccination of health care workers, as Sequence 1 recipients.

In this second week of vaccine delivery, the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit has redeployed 90 per cent of our staff to immunize members of the public who self-identify as part of Sequence 1. Clinics are running this week 5 days a week simultaneously in six sites across Simcoe and Muskoka, including evenings and Saturday. This is important for those people whose family doctor is not offering the pH1N1 vaccine, or do not have a primary care provider. [Click here for the flu clinic schedule.](#)

*(Note seasonal flu vaccine will **not** be available at the H1N1 flu vaccine clinics. Public clinics for the seasonal flu vaccine will be available again in the New Year.)*

We have **now also been able to satisfy all outstanding vaccine orders from participating primary care physicians (119) and all hospitals to complete Sequence 1 vaccination among their eligible populations**. In total, we have distributed almost 38,000 doses to family doctors, hospitals, long term care homes and Emergency Medical Services; and have vaccinated almost 10,000 people in public health pH1N1 clinics as of the end of November 5, 2009.

We anticipate having enough vaccine to continue to offer public health clinics as planned this weekend and early next week with our current supply. However, we will reduce the number of days (not the number of sites) we will provide clinics next week as supply dictates. Please check our website for the [most current schedule of clinic dates and locations](#). These clinics will continue to be reserved for people in Sequence 1 until demand has been met or we are directed otherwise by the province.

Unadjuvanted Vaccine Supply

The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit has received 3,200 doses of unadjuvanted pH1N1 vaccine (Panvax). It comes in 10 dose vials, with stability for 28 days once opened.

Unadjuvanted Vaccine Distribution

The province has directed that this unadjuvanted vaccine is reserved exclusively for pregnant women.

Given the small supply, the health unit will be distributing these initial doses to participating Obstetricians as well as through our public health clinics.

Flu Assessment Centres

You will be aware that some communities in Ontario have opened Flu Assessment Centres to enhance the capacity of primary care and relieve emergency rooms in the face of increased influenza-like-illness presenting to the health care system. In Simcoe and Muskoka, a cross-sectoral subcommittee of health care and municipal agencies worked over the last two years to develop [local influenza assessment centre models](#), but ultimately were unable to achieve agreement on the final model to be implemented.

Responses to the increased demand from influenza-like-illness in Simcoe and Muskoka (which we anticipate to continue for several more weeks) are now being developed and implemented at the local level. Most involve our hospital corporations working with front-line care providers, such as family health teams or networks, CCACs, and individual health care workers.

The health unit is assisting with these processes when needed by having a representative attend meetings upon request, sharing information for capacity building, and assisting with provincial requirements and linkages. As Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Gardner has certified that "alternate forms of influenza assessment, treatment and referral are needed to meet patient demands for influenza care", and submitted the required forms to the province as part of the funding application for assessment centres (per MOHLTC's [Funding Guidelines for Implementing Alternate Influenza Assessment, Treatment and Referral Strategies](#)). The health unit has also offered to be "lead agency" for flu assessment centres as described within the provincial guidelines, in terms of communication with the province, collating and submitting required documentation for possible cost reimbursements.

Dr. Gardner has already communicated with the CEOs of local hospitals, family health teams, and community health centres about these roles our health unit has offered and to support any assessment centres developed in Simcoe and Muskoka. We are already working with some and look forward to assisting others upon request.

Situation updates are distributed to a broad range of health unit partners including health care professionals, health sector emergency planners, community service providers (including those who work with vulnerable populations), educators and day care providers.

