

# Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 Influenza A Situation Update for Partners

## Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit

November 27, 2009

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We are moving to the next phase of influenza immunization response and are expanding our clinics in scope and duration and are able to offer both seasonal and pH1N1 vaccines to all those six months of age and older. We will announce this publicly this afternoon during a press briefing. Please see the influenza vaccines information below for details and see how you can assist in promoting this throughout our communities.

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** likely reached the peak of influenza activity during the first week of November; however we expect to see continued, though declining, activity for the next several weeks.

The reported number of laboratory confirmed influenza cases declined for the second consecutive week last week, as did the number of hospital admissions for flu. Local emergency departments (ED) continued to see a drop in the number of visits for influenza-like illness (ILI) last week and most have returned to seasonal baseline levels.

The number of schools reporting absenteeism of 10 per cent or more also appears to have returned to baseline levels. Last week, only two per cent of elementary schools reported student absenteeism above 10 per cent for the week, which is substantially lower than the peak of 60% reported in the first week of November.

There has been a seven-fold increase in the rate ILI reports at the peak of the pH1N1 activity compared to the same time last year, and a three to four-fold increase in the rate of ILI reports compared to the peak of seasonal influenza last year. There have been 76 people admitted to hospital during the second wave of pH1N1 compared to an average of 90 admissions per year in the influenza seasons 2006 to 2008. We have also had 12 ICU admissions during the second wave of pH1N1.

There have been three deaths in Simcoe Muskoka where the individuals had confirmed pH1N1 diagnosis. In all cases the individuals had preexisting medical conditions. Comparatively in 2007, the health unit was notified of 11 deaths associated with seasonal influenza A.

## **Influenza Vaccine**

### **pH1N1 Vaccine**

Although the level pH1N1 activity in our communities appears to be past the peak, the levels are still well above the expected range for this time of year and some risk of community transmission remains. Immunization is still effective in reducing the risk of influenza.

To date the health unit has distributed close to 144,000 doses of pH1N1 vaccine. This includes approximately 74,200 to physician offices, 11,300 to hospitals, 8,300 to long-term care facilities, 2,300 to EMS, 2,000 to other vaccine delivery agents, and 46,000 through public health clinics.

We are entering a new phase in our pH1N1 vaccination response. With the inclusion of all people six months of age and over for vaccination, an ample supply of vaccine regularly coming to the health unit, and most significantly, the relaxation of the record reporting requirements for other vaccine providers, we are now able to allow many other venues to participate in the provision of vaccine. Large employers who are interested in providing pH1N1 vaccination clinics for their staff can apply. Visit the [Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care](#) website for prequalification details and forms.

As the demand for vaccine through our public clinics continues to be steady, the health unit is continuing clinics through the first two weeks of December. We are also increasing the number of clinic venues, in particular venues in many smaller communities. Clinics will operate four days a week in each of our six geographic areas and are booked until December 12<sup>th</sup>.

Although we have administered a very large quantity of vaccine, both at our clinics and through our partners, there are still populations that have reduced access to vaccination. These include members of smaller communities, vulnerable populations and house-bound individuals. We have been working with Emergency Medical Services (EMS) to provide vaccination to the homeless, and with EMS and Community Care Access Centres (CCAC) to provide vaccination to house-bound people. We are also working with other community partners to initiate ways of providing vaccination to other vulnerable groups.

### **Seasonal Influenza Vaccine**

We still have the entire influenza season to come. It is entirely possible that we will see significant activity with seasonal influenza strains later during the influenza season. We now have the opportunity and capacity to provide seasonal influenza vaccine in addition to the pH1N1 (adjuvanted and unadjuvanted) vaccines at all our influenza immunization clinics.

Seasonal vaccine will continue to be available through participating health care providers as well as large workplaces interested in providing employee clinics.

As of December 1st all of the clinics hosted by the health unit will be combined pH1N1/Seasonal influenza vaccination clinics. [Please check our updated clinic schedules posted to our website.](#)

Along with newspaper ads, digital ads in community centres and work with our media partners, we have created six posters to promote the schedule of clinics throughout our six regions. We would appreciate your assistance in getting these posters up in locations such as municipal offices and community centres, libraries, schools, and in community services offices. Please consider [downloading the posters from our website](#) and displaying them in locations for staff and public viewing where appropriate.

### **Vaccine Safety**

This month's *It's Your Health* e-newsletter from the Health Canada addresses the topic of misconceptions about vaccine safety in general. [For answers to common questions review this link.](#)

## ***Flu Assessment Centres***

The County of Simcoe in partnership with Royal Victoria Hospital (RVH), Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, North Simcoe Muskoka Community Care Access Centre, Barrie Community Family Health Team and the City of Barrie opened an assessment center in order to address the increased volume of patients with flu-like symptoms being seen at local hospital emergency departments and walk-in clinics.

The opening of the centre helped people with influenza-like illness (ILI) receive timely assessment and treatment (when appropriate) for influenza.

The assessment centre site commenced operation on November 16<sup>th</sup> at the Westminster Presbyterian Church, 170 Steele Street in Barrie. The assessment centre was staffed by physicians from RVH and the Barrie Family Health Team, nurse practitioners (NPs), registered nurses (RNs), registered practical nurses (RPNs), paramedics, as well as operational support staff from the county and the health unit.

Although busy during the first week of operation, during the second week the number of people seeking medical consultation for ILI has greatly decreased, and as a result **the assessment centre will be closed as of Monday November 30<sup>th</sup>**.

Operational hours for the remainder of this week have been reduced. The assessment centre will continue to operate for the weekend. Remaining clinic hours are as follows:

Friday November 27 – 1 p.m. - 5 p.m.

Saturday November 28 – 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Sunday November 29 – 5 p.m. - 9 p.m.

Agencies involved with the set up and operation of the assessment centre should be commended for their dedication and efforts to meet the health care needs of local residents. Upon closure of this centre, patients can continue to seek medical care through their local hospital emergency departments, walk-in clinics or family physicians. Although this site is set to close, should the need for a pH1N1 assessment centre arise again in the coming weeks, it can quickly be reopened.