

Health **FAX**

Rise in Influenza Activity: Physicians Encouraged to Continue to Provide Influenza Vaccinations

Attention: **Physicians, Emergency Departments, Walk- In Clinics/Urgent Care Clinics, Infection Control Practitioners, Nurse Practitioners, Ambulance Services, Regional Infection Control Network, Occupational Health Professionals**

Date: January 10, 2011

Over the last couple of weeks, Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit has noted a marked rise in influenza activity. **Since Sept 1, 2010, 77 laboratory confirmed cases of influenza have been reported in the community which is higher than expected for this time of year (comparable 5-year-season-to-date average* is 13 cases).** As seen in previous influenza seasons, higher rates of infection are being reported among children less than four years of age and those older than 65 years.

In the last 12 days, we have had 5 Influenza A Long Term Care Facility outbreaks out of a total of 6 for this season.

Ninety-eight percent of all influenza reported cases in Ontario are influenza A: 70% are H3, 5% are the pandemic (H1N1) subtype, and 25% have no subtype information available, but presumably the majority of these are H3. **The influenza vaccine for the 2010/11 season is currently a near 100% match to the circulating strains.**

Seasonal influenza typically persists until March, and the predominant circulating strain (H3N2) is contained in the vaccine. **Therefore, SMDHU is encouraging physicians to continue to vaccinate their patients.** All individuals aged six months or older who live, work or attend school in Ontario, and have no contraindications are encouraged to receive the publicly funded vaccine. Patients with influenza-like illness should be advised to stay home from work or school while ill, and to practice frequent hand hygiene and cough etiquette. Patients hospitalized with acute respiratory infection should be tested for influenza.

SMDHU still has influenza vaccine available for physicians to order. To order vaccine fax your order form to 721-1495 or call 721-7520 ext. 8808.

For more information on or to report cases of influenza or other reportable diseases, please call the Communicable Disease Team at: (705) 721-7520 ext. 8809 or Toll Free at: (877) 721-7520 ext. 8809.

* Historic average excludes the 2009-2010 influenza season due to the pandemic