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First Lab-Confirmed Influenza (A) Case in Simcoe Muskoka

Attention: Physicians, Long-Term Care Homes, Retirement Homes, Emergency Departments, Infection Control Practitioners, Nurse Practitioners, Walk-In Clinics/Urgent Care Clinics, Family Health Teams, Occupational Health Professionals, Neighbouring Health Units, County of Simcoe Paramedic Services, Muskoka Paramedic Services, Rama Mnjikaning EMS, Ontario Health, Home and Community Care Support Services, Midwives, Hospice, Group Homes, Indigenous Health Care & Community, Child Care Facilities

Date: December 14, 2021

Simcoe Muskoka's first locally acquired and lab confirmed case of Influenza A has been reported to the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) for the 2021-2022 season. The sample was submitted as part of an individual case investigation in the South Simcoe area.

Influenza activity has started to be detected across Ontario. As of December 4, 2021, 40% of health units have reported at least one case of flu for the season to date. SMDHU will continue to analyze surveillance data and provide updates as necessary.

The following is an update of the influenza activity in Ontario and Canada:

Ontario:

- As of December 4, 2021 (week 48), 29 cases have been detected in Ontario. Of these, 86% were Influenza A.

Canada:

- In week 48, influenza activity remains at low interseasonal levels across the country, with 20% of all regions reporting any activity.
- The percentage of laboratory tests positive for influenza is exceptionally low for this time of year compared to recent pre-pandemic years. The most common influenza virus circulating is Influenza A (H3N2).

SMDHU recommends getting immunized as soon as possible with any of the available age-appropriate influenza vaccines. Currently, it is too early to determine if the vaccine is a good match for the circulating strains. This year's quadrivalent influenza vaccine for the 2021-2022 influenza season (northern hemisphere winter), contains the following:

- A/Victoria/2570/2019 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus;
- A/Wisconsin/588/2019 (H1N1) pdm09-like virus;
- A/Cambodia/e0826360/2020 (H3N2)-like virus; and
- B/Washington/02/2019-like virus (B/Victoria lineage)-like virus

On July 26, 2021, PHO Laboratory implemented changes to eligibility of multiplex respiratory virus PCR (MRVP) testing for children <18 years old seen in the Emergency Department, hospitalized patients, outbreak-associated patients, and patients in institutions not in outbreak with acute respiratory illness (ARI).



Previously, MRVP testing was routinely available for persons tested in ICU/CCU and remote communities only. Starting July 26, 2021, PHO Laboratory has made the following changes to MRVP testing:

1. To support enhanced respiratory virus surveillance, MRVP testing will be available for symptomatic children (<18 years) seen in the Emergency Department (ED). This testing, which is generally not required for clinical purposes, will be re-evaluated in fall/winter 2021.
2. MRVP testing will be available for all symptomatic hospitalized patients (ward and ICU/CCU).
3. Specimens from the first four symptomatic patients in an outbreak that request respiratory virus testing will be tested by MRVP.
4. Symptomatic patients tested in institutional settings (non-outbreak) will be eligible for MRVP testing when ordered on the PHO Laboratory requisition.

MRVP testing requests for patients with acute respiratory illness (ARI) in the settings described above should be clearly indicated on the requisition by selecting “Respiratory Viruses” or “COVID-19 Virus AND Respiratory Viruses” as appropriate in section 5 – “Test(s) Requested”. Only mark one of the three test request options. In addition, the patient’s setting and symptoms should be indicated on the requisition. For more information, please go to: <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/laboratory-services/test-information-index/virus-respiratory>

The Weekly Influenza News will be posted between December 8th and April 27th. You can find this information at the following link: <http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/Topics/InfectiousDiseases/SeasonalInfluenza/Surveillance.aspx>

All lab-confirmed influenza cases and institutional respiratory outbreaks are reportable to public health to ensure timely follow-up. For additional information or to report influenza cases and respiratory outbreaks, please contact the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, Infectious Diseases Team at (705) 721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520 extension 8809.

Additional Information on Influenza

1. Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, Influenza factsheet can be accessed at: <http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/Topics/InfectiousDiseases/DiseaseInformation/FactSheetsIL/Influenza.aspx>
2. Public Health Ontario: Influenza information can be accessed at: <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/diseases-and-conditions/infectious-diseases/respiratory-diseases/influenza>
3. Public Health Ontario, Influenza Vaccines for the 2021-2022 Influenza Season can be accessed at: https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/f/2020/fact-sheet-influenza-vaccine-2020-2021.pdf?sc_lang=en
4. Public Health Ontario, Influenza Antiviral Treatment can be accessed at: https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/f/2020/fact-sheet--antiviral-medications-influenza.pdf?sc_lang=en
5. Public Health Ontario, Antiviral Medications for Treatment of Influenza can be accessed at: https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/fact-sheet-antiviral-medication-influenza.pdf?la=en&_cldee=aml5bG1hbi5mZW5pa0BzbWRodS5vcmc%3d&recipientid=contact-ae4508e2496fe411a5800050569e0009-70968e309d4a44dd99a1b0403c565355&esid=bd901035-14f0-e911-8238-0050569e0009
6. Public Health Agency of Canada, Issues of FluWatch can be accessed at: <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/fluwatch/index-eng.php>
7. NACI Statement on Influenza Vaccination for the 2021-2022 season can be accessed at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/reports-publications/canada-communicable-disease-report-ccdr/monthly-issue/2021-47/issue-9-september-2021/seasonal-influenza-vaccine-statement-2021-2022.html>

8. Public Health Ontario now issues the Ontario Respiratory Virus Bulletin which can be accessed at:
<http://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/ServicesAndTools/SurveillanceServices/Pages/Ontario-Respiratory-Virus-Bulletin.aspx>