

Health **FAX**

Influenza Currently Affecting Younger Adults More Than Usual

Attention: **Physicians, Emergency Departments, Nurse Practitioners, Infection Control Practitioners, Occupational Health Professionals, Walk-In Clinics/Urgent Care Clinics, Family Health Teams, NSM LHIN, Central LHIN, Long-Term Care Homes, Rest and Retirement Homes, County of Simcoe Paramedic Services, Medavie EMS Ontario – Muskoka, Rama Mnjikaning EMS**

Date: January 22, 2014

The first wave of influenza peaked about one to two weeks ago and influenza activity for this wave is now on the downward trend. Locally, there have been 171 lab-confirmed influenza cases (169 influenza A and two influenza B) reported to date with **the vast majority of influenza A cases being H1N1**. Approximately 32.5% of the local lab-confirmed influenza cases have been hospitalized with four local deaths caused by influenza, which is not unusual for any given influenza season. As a comparison, during the 2012-13 influenza season, there were a total of 429 cases with 12 deaths. This season, there have been two influenza A institutional outbreaks in our region.

Provincial and national surveillance of laboratory data, hospitalizations with influenza and prescriptions for influenza antivirals currently **show a greater proportion of cases among adults 20-64 years of age compared to those ≥65 years of age, which is a change from the usual demographics of an influenza season.** This can be explained by the fact that the H1N1 virus that emerged in the 2009 pandemic caused more illness in children and young adults, compared to older adults, although severe illness was seen in all age groups. Some Simcoe Muskoka area hospitals are also reporting more than usual influenza-related ICU admissions. However, at this time, there have been no scientific reports or evidence of significant changes in the H1N1 strain that would suggest an increased virulence or transmissibility.

The vaccine remains an excellent match to this year's circulating strains. **To date, 100% of typed samples of flu A specimens and about 90% of flu B specimens are a match to this year's vaccine.**

While annual vaccination is the best tool for prevention of influenza and its complications, antiviral drugs are also used as prophylaxis for residents and unvaccinated staff in institutions that are experiencing an influenza outbreak. Treatment with antiviral drugs is a potential second line of defense for those who become ill to reduce morbidity and mortality. For current recommendations related to the use of influenza antivirals for the 2013-14 season, please refer to the Association of Medical Microbiology and Infectious Disease Canada guidelines found at <http://www.ammi.ca/guidelines>.