
200 Front Street West, Suite 2800
Toronto, ON M5V 3L1
Tel: 416 205 1300 Fax: 416 205 1360
www.oha.com

November 9, 2009

**For the Attention of
Hospital CEOs, OHA Board of Directors, Infection Prevention
and Control Leads, Occupational Health and Safety leads,
Joint Health and Safety Committee, CACN, Chief HR Officers,
Emergency Department Managers, Emergency Preparedness
and Pandemic Planning Leads**

**From: Greg Shaw, Vice President,
Strategic Human Resources Management Services**

UPDATE pH1N1 Influenza A

Media-Related Activity Regarding Board Vaccinations

Recently, a number of news media reports have surfaced surrounding hospitals' vaccination programs. We understand and appreciate that many hospitals have been adhering to the Public Health Agency of Canada's loose definition of a health care worker – i.e., those who provide direct patient care as well as those who support the provision of health care services. Includes full-time staff, part-time staff, students, regular visitors and volunteers, i.e. all persons carrying out the health care function.¹

From the Ontario Hospital Association's perspective, hospitals' original decisions to include board members in their vaccination programs was understandable, especially given that supply issues have only recently come to light. The OHA was quoted in a *Toronto Star* article on Saturday, November 7th stating that:

"Board members may not be paid employees, but they serve in very important voluntary governance roles and help lead the hospitals and are in and out of hospitals across the province" daily...it would be easy to see how hospitals could interpret some board members as being eligible."

It is now clear that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has taken a formal position on vaccinating trustees. The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care stated in a Canadian Press

¹ <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/alert-alerte/h1n1/vacc/vacc-eng.php>

Article, also on November 7th, that “Ontario hospitals that are allowing their board members to jump the queue for the H1N1 vaccine must stop the practice immediately.”

Today, the OHA has learned that many hospitals in the Greater Toronto Area and elsewhere are receiving follow-up media calls, requesting information about their protocols and whether their board members have received vaccinations.

The OHA encourages hospitals to use the following key messages:

- It is typical practice to not distinguish one volunteer from another and so, like other hospitals in the province, our hospital interpreted volunteer trustees to fall under the definition of health care workers. Board members make regular visits to our hospital sites, and, as always, we want to ensure the health, safety and general wellbeing of everyone who enters and spends time in our facility.
- Hospitals across the province have been doing their best to ensure that internal vaccination clinics are set-up and that all hospital personnel – paid or volunteer – were able to receive a vaccination if they chose to do so.
- Now that the definition of health care worker has been clarified, we will act accordingly.

Additional Updates

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care’s (Ministry) Emergency Operations Centre remains activated and at an “Enhanced” status level.

The hours of the Healthcare Provider Hotline have increased to: Monday to Friday 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM and Saturday/Sunday from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM. The number is 1-866-212-2272, and health care providers are encouraged to call with any patient care questions they may have related to pH1N1.

There are approximately 41 flu assessment centres established across the province. Locations and information are available here:

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/ccom/flu/h1n1/public/assess_clinics.aspx

As a reminder, some general points to keep in mind related to flu centres:

- They are an adjustment to an existing centre;
- They must serve a broader community need;
- They must only see flu patients;
- They are intended to absorb the surge seen by primary care and emergency departments;
- A lead agency must be identified locally and becomes the main liaison with the Ministry;

- The Ministry reimburses said lead agency for eligible costs;
- The Ministry also provides antivirals and supplies from stockpile.

Also, an IHN was released on November 2nd providing information for family physicians regarding remuneration and other supports available to address a surge in demand for services as a result of pH1N1. The IHN is available here:

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/emu/health_notices/ihn_20091102.pdf

You may access all of the OHA's H1N1 Updates at www.oha.com/h1n1, or contact Tim Savage, OHA Health and Safety Consultant at 416-205-1395 (tsavage@oha.com) for more information.

For media support, please contact Amy Ouellette, OHA Public Affairs at 416-205-1433 (aouellette@oha.com).