

Roy Romanow to present keynote at Determinants of Our Health symposium

Toronto Public Health is partnering with the Centre for International Health, Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto, and a number of other agencies to host a two-day symposium (October 30th – 31st) in celebration of 125 years of Public Health in Toronto.

“Determinants of Our Health: Toronto in a Global Village” will feature distinguished speakers, new research evidence and community dialogue on a range of topics related to themes set out in the recent report of the World Health Organization Commission on Social Determinants of Health.

Keynote presenters include:

- Roy Romanow, the founding chair of the Canadian Index of Wellbeing, on the vital importance of building a pan-Canadian initiative to measure and report on quality of life dimensions that go beyond the Gross Domestic Product.
- Steven Johnson, bestselling American author of five books, on the intersection of science, technology and personal experience. His most recent work is a thrilling, page-turning account of one of the foundation stories of modern public health: “The Ghost Map: the Story of London’s Most Terrifying Epidemic and how it Changed Science, Cities and the Modern World.”
- Margaret Whitehead, W.H. Duncan Chair of Public Health, Faculty of Medicine, University of Liverpool and Head of the WHO Collaborating Centre

for Policy Research on the Social Determinants of Health. Her focus is tracing the health equity impact of public policies and political context across the European setting. She will deliver the Charles Hastings Lecture in Public Health as the opening keynote.

Where systematic differences in health are judged to be avoidable by reasonable action they are, quite simply, unfair. It is this that we label health inequity. Putting right these inequities – the huge and remediable differences in health between and within countries – is a matter of social justice. Reducing health inequities is, for the Commission on Social Determinants of Health, an ethical imperative. Social injustice is killing people on a grand scale.

Excerpt from final report of World Health Organization Commission on Social Determinants of Health.

Workshops will feature leading researchers and public health advocates exploring the interplay of issues that determine the health status of Toronto’s communities and populations: diabetes; mental health; economic hardship and income inequality; intervention strategies for community development; and the uses of evidence to shape public policy.

The symposium will coincide with the opening on October 30th of an exhibit at Toronto Archives, “An Infectious Idea: 125 Years of Public Health in Toronto.” The opening reception for the exhibit will include the presentation of the inaugural

Public Health Champion Awards to two recipients, one individual and one agency.

Online registration for the Symposium is available at www.uofttix.ca. Fees are \$125 professional and \$25 student/low income. The symposium is being supported by participation from the Centre for Research on Inner City Health (CRICH), the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) and the Atkinson Charitable Foundation, with a grant provided by the Canadian Institutes for Health Research.

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Mark your calendars

- October 11** [Breastfeeding Challenge](#), North York Civic Centre, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
- October 16** Community HPV vaccine [catch-up clinic](#), East York Civic Centre, 4:00 – 6:00 p.m.
- October 16** 2nd Annual TB Update, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m., North York Memorial Hall, 416-338-7925
- October 17** Public [celebration](#) of the life of Dr. Sheela Basrur, Convocation Hall, 4:00 – 5:30 p.m.
- October 22** [Board of Health](#), City Hall, Committee Room 1, 1:00 p.m.
- October 27** Flu vaccination [clinics](#) launch
- October 30 – 31** Determinants of Our Health: Toronto in a Global Village [Symposium](#), Hart House.
- November 17** Community HPV vaccine [catch-up clinic](#), Etobicoke Civic Centre, 4:00 – 6:00 p.m.
- November 27** Fundraising reception for the [Sheela Basrur Centre](#), Carlu
- December 11** Community HPV vaccine [catch-up clinic](#), N Scarborough Civic Centre, 4:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Campaign launched to increase awareness of HPV vaccine

For the second year, Toronto Public Health is offering the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine, free of charge, to protect Grade 8 females against cervical cancer. The HPV vaccination program is funded by the provincial government and is being delivered by health units across Ontario. Almost 60 percent of Grade 8 girls in Toronto were vaccinated in the 2007/08 school year to protect themselves from HPV—slightly higher than the provincial average. To help ensure even more girls are protected, Toronto Public Health and the province have embarked on a communication campaign.

“Each year, there are 500 cases and 140 deaths from cervical cancer in Ontario,” said Dr. Barbara Yaffe, Associate Medical Officer of Health for the City of Toronto. “Regular cervical cancer screening, combined with the HPV vaccine, provides the best protection against cervical cancer.”

HPV is a common virus that can cause cancer of the cervix and genital warts. Beginning this month, the HPV vaccine will be administered to Grade 8 girls at school-based vaccination clinics.

Three doses of the HPV vaccine are required for full protection. Girls who are starting Grade 9 and missed their second or third dose of the HPV vaccine can still get vaccinated at a Toronto Public Health catch-up clinic. The HPV vaccine is considered safe and very effective. To date, there have been no serious adverse reactions to the HPV vaccine.

The dates for the Toronto Public Health HPV catch-up clinics are available by visiting www.toronto.ca/health or by calling the TPH Immunization Information Line at 416-392-1250. For general HPV information, call ServiceOntario INFOLine at 1-866-559-4598 or visit www.hpvontario.ca.

Profile: Listening to the needs of homeless pregnant women

Since she first began working at Toronto Public Health more than twenty years ago, Registered Nurse Alice Gorman became known for speaking her mind on behalf of her clients. Even more, she is respected for possessing an instinctive ability to understand the needs of the young women in the Homeless At-Risk Prenatal Program (HARP).

Gorman credits her first job at a native outpost in Northern Alberta, after graduating from the University of Western Ontario in 1985, with teaching her how to be a great listener.

“This was an amazing learning experience and taught me to be humble about what people need,” she said. “As a nurse, it is important to take the time to listen, really listen, and you will find out what people need to improve their health, to make their lives better.”

After completing her first nursing position in 1987, Gorman began working with Toronto Public Health. She didn't think she would last more than a few months because she wasn't doing hands-on assessments with patients. Gorman quickly discovered, however, that the ever changing needs of a diverse city like Toronto regularly provides new learning experiences and challenges.

“This is why Toronto Public Health is such a great place to work,” she said. “There is so much room for innovation and I am encouraged to be a social change agent.”



Alice Gorman

Now the manager for HARP, a unique service delivered by a dedicated team of 6 Public Health Nurses and 2 Registered Dietitians, Gorman helps provide intensive support to homeless pregnant and parenting young women. The model for the program evolved over the last decade, building on a Board of Health report in 1998. The scope of the work was shaped by an extensive literature review, input from community partners and a 5-year pilot project to research and implement service to the population. Over 100 clients were served in 2007 and this year the team expects to work with 166 new clients.

“The overall goal of HARP is to improve pregnancy outcomes for mom and baby and to prevent babies from being born on the street,” said Gorman, who still has abundant energy and infectious passion.

“We see a lot of heartbreaking situations, but we are also privileged to witness the positive impact of our work and that makes it all worthwhile.”

HARP can prevent huge problems in the next generation, Gorman said. “Through a holistic approach, our amazing team helps reduce the barriers and to improve access to prenatal care for marginalized homeless women.”

Like all Toronto Public Health programs, HARP advocate for both individual client needs and systemic issues related to social determinants of health.

Homeless At-Risk Prenatal Program (HARP) services include:

- Frequent, intensive and flexible prenatal home visiting
- Client-centred prenatal and nutrition education, counselling and support
- Service coordination
- Free prenatal vitamins, food certificates and TTC tokens for medical appointments
- Supportive accompaniment to appointments, meetings and programs
- Referrals to community resources
- Advocacy for both individual client needs and systemic issues related to social determinants of health

Make a splash! Campaign encourages older adults to get active

Toronto Public Health, along with public health units in the Regions of Durham, Halton, Peel and York, is launching an energetic communications campaign to encourage older adults to get active. The goal of “Make a Splash!” is to remind older adults to get up and get moving to help prevent injury from falls.

“In Toronto, the older adult population is expected to grow by 38 per cent by 2031, nearly doubling,” said Dr. David McKeown, Toronto’s Medical Officer of Health. “Injuries related to falls occur nine times more frequently among older adults.”

To reduce the risk of being injured from falls, older adults need 30 to 60 minutes of activity per day to protect and improve their health, said Dr. McKeown.

“The safest way to reach this level is by slowing increasing your activity in 10-minute intervals.”

The facts on falls and injuries:

- Every 10 minutes in Ontario, at least one older adult (65 years and older) visits an emergency department due to a fall.*
- Every 30 minutes in Ontario, at least one older adult is admitted to hospital due to a fall.*
- In Toronto in 2006, older adults accounted for 4,086 hospital stays and 17,250 emergency department visits due to a fall.*
- Reducing the incidence of falls in older adults in Ontario by 20 % would lead to over 4,000 fewer hospital stays, 1,000 fewer older adults being permanently disabled and a cost saving of \$121 million annually. (The Economic Burden of Injury in Ontario, 2006).
- Falls result in 40 per cent of all nursing home admissions for older adults. (Tinetti & Williams, 2003).

* Ontario Injury Prevention Statistics, 2007-2008



Make a splash!

Be active. Keep your independence.

Help prevent injuries.



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On October 1, the International Day of Older Persons, Toronto Public Health and its GTA partner health units launched a new health promotion campaign to encourage adults 55 years and older to incorporate more daily activity into their everyday routines.

Immunization protects everyone from spread of disease

In spite of a very high immunization rate for measles vaccine among school-aged children in Toronto, the City of Toronto was impacted by a measles outbreak earlier this year. Most of the people who became ill were born between 1970 and 1995—a time when people routinely received one dose of measles vaccine as part of their childhood vaccinations. However, two doses of the vaccine provide the best protection.

To encourage everyone to get fully vaccinated, Toronto Public Health will be stepping up its communication efforts to promote the importance of immunization.

“Vaccines protect everyone,” said Dr. Vinita Dubey, Associate Medical Officer of Health. “When vaccines are given to children, they not only protect the child, they also reduce the spread of disease in the entire community.”

Vaccination is considered the number one public health achievement in the 20th century and has saved millions of lives by eliminating many serious childhood diseases. Before the development of vaccines thousands died or were seriously disabled from infectious diseases such as measles, polio, meningitis, diphtheria and rubella. Prior to the vaccine, many children infected with measles suffered complications such as ear infections,

pneumonia, and encephalitis (brain infection). Fact sheets on diseases preventable through vaccination and information about local immunization clinics can be found on the Toronto Public Health website www.toronto.ca/health/. For more information, call the immunization information line at (416) 392-1250.



Toronto Public Health responds during times of need

This summer was extremely busy for Toronto Public Health staff as they were involved in two unusual emergency situations and a food borne illness outbreak.

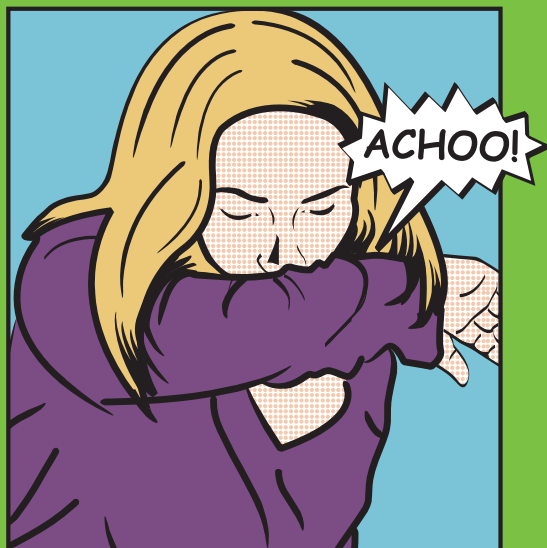
The first situation occurred in July after a fire in a Second Avenue apartment building displaced over 900 residents. TPH inspectors visited the building several times to monitor air quality after the fire, and staff were also present to provide psycho-social support to distressed residents.

In early August, a massive explosion at Sunrise Propane Industrial Gases resulted in the temporary evacuation of over 1000 homes. The explosion spread debris throughout the neighbourhood, and some of it

contained asbestos. Public Health staff went door-to-door distributing information on asbestos, staffed a hotline for residents requesting health information, and interpreted results from air quality tests taken outdoors and in homes throughout the area. All test results indicated that asbestos levels were within acceptable provincial standards.

For the past few months, staff have been investigating several Toronto cases of listeria as part of a province wide outbreak related to recalled Maple Leaf meat products. Health inspectors contacted long-term care facilities, hospitals, and small food stores to ensure that recalled products were not being sold or served.

No tissue?



Do the Sleeve Sneeze.

- Cough or sneeze into your sleeve
- Keep your hands clean
- Stop the spread of GERMS

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Flu vaccination clinics launch in October

On October 27, Toronto Public Health will launch its annual flu vaccination clinics. Influenza, the flu, is caused by a specific virus that typically comes around each fall or winter.

Everyone is at risk of getting the flu—each year, on average, 25 per cent of Canadians get the flu and over 1,500 people will die from the illness. Most people who get the flu will not get seriously ill. However, the elderly, very young children (less than two years of age), individuals with some underlying medical conditions, such as chronic bronchitis, diabetes or chronic heart disease, or weakened immune systems can become very ill from complications associated with getting the flu.

The best time to get your shot is between October and mid-November every fall. Since peak flu activity in Toronto usually occurs between December and March, getting your flu shot after November will still help protect you against the flu. For more information about Toronto Public Health flu vaccination clinics go to: www.toronto.ca/health

Editor's update

This is the third issue of Toronto Public Health Bulletin a newsletter published as part of our 125th Anniversary activities. The objective of the newsletter is to share information with our stakeholders about new initiatives and resources to help promote a healthier city.

As one of our community partners, you have received the Bulletin. Thank you for taking the time to read it and for your efforts to support public health in the City of Toronto. Please feel free to share the newsletter with your own partners and colleagues. Please send your ideas or feedback, or request to be removed from the mailing list, to tphbulletin@toronto.ca.