

Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Update

| | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| Date: | October 29, 2008 |
| To: | Board of Health |
| From: | Medical Officer of Health |
| Wards: | All |
| Reference Number: | |

SUMMARY

The report provides a summary of the progress achieved in 2008 by Toronto Public Health (TPH) in pandemic influenza planning and preparedness activities (see Attachment 1). The 2009 TPH Pandemic Influenza workplan outlines the activities that will be undertaken in the first three, six and twelve months of 2009, those that are ongoing, as well as those which will be addressed in the longer term (see Attachment 2).

Financial Impact

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of April 25, 26 & 27, 2006, Toronto City Council endorsed the Toronto Pandemic Influenza Plan. A revised version of the plan, now titled the Toronto Public Health Plan for an Influenza Pandemic, was received by the Board of Health at its meeting of October 15, 2007. The Board of Health has requested that the Medical Officer of Health provide monthly verbal updates, quarterly written reports and an annual written report on the status of preparedness for an influenza pandemic. This is the annual report for 2008.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Influenza is a highly contagious respiratory illness caused by a virus which is constantly changing. An influenza pandemic occurs when there is an abrupt and major change in the protein structure of the Influenza A virus, resulting in a new subtype. Since people have little or no immunity to this new strain, it can spread quickly causing outbreaks. When outbreaks occur worldwide the event is called a pandemic. The exact nature of the next pandemic virus and illness will not be known until it emerges. Influenza pandemics tend to occur in two or three waves over a period of months to a year or more. An effective vaccine would likely take four to six months

to become available. Because health care services in Toronto are currently working at or near capacity, a severe pandemic could overwhelm the health system.

Toronto Public Health (TPH) is the lead health agency for pandemic influenza planning, preparedness and response in the City of Toronto. Local planning is based on the Canadian Pandemic Influenza Plan (CPIP) and Ontario Health Plan for an Influenza Pandemic (OHPIP).

TPH is responsible for the local planning and delivery of disease surveillance and reporting, health risk assessment and communications, public health measures such as case and contact investigation and management, liaison with hospitals and other agencies, the distribution and administration of antiviral medication and vaccine, supporting Toronto Emergency Management Program Committee (TEMPC) operations at the Toronto Emergency Operations Centre, and ensuring psychosocial supports. In addition, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) has directed TPH to lead the planning of influenza assessment, treatment and referral centres - to be known as community flu centres - and play a coordinating role in the broader health care sector in the city. This coordinating role has been extended in OHPIP to include planning for all influenza assessment and treatment services, including the development of community flu centres if required. The Medical Officer of Health is to provide direction on the role of primary care in the public health unit.

COMMENTS

A) Surveillance Update

The World Health Organization (WHO) pandemic alert phase remains at Phase 3. This means that there are cases of human infection(s) with a new subtype (H5N1, which first caused human cases in 1997), but no human-to-human spread or at most rare instances of spread to a close contact. To date, the WHO has confirmed human infection in fifteen countries. There is currently no highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza in North America.

B) Update on Toronto Public Health & City of Toronto Planning & Preparedness

The highlights of TPH accomplishments in 2008 include:

- Further development of the mass immunization plan. A Memorandum of Understanding has been finalized with one of the public school boards and is being finalized with the other for use of school space for this aspect of the response.
- TPH has begun Incident Management System training of all non-union staff. Staff assigned to maintain TPH activities identified as critical to continue during the response have received an orientation to their roles.
- A quantitative respiratory fit test program to fit test all TPH staff to an N95 respirator has commenced.
- TPH has purchased a four week stockpile of personal protective equipment and infection control supplies.
- Work is ongoing between TPH and our corporate partners regarding natural death surge planning, corporate stockpiling of supplies, communication to staff and planning for and participation in emergency exercises.
- A draft plan for the implementation of Community Flu Centres has been completed.

- Local geographic health care coordination teams have been established to identify and work on issues at a local level. TPH hosted a meeting of approximately 120 stakeholders from across the health care system (e.g. Local Health Integration Networks, Community Care Access Centres, Long Term Care Homes, Emergency Medical Services, primary care) on October 17, 2008, to share new information, update on new provincial plan and engage participants in a discussion of roles, communication and next steps.

In order to ensure TPH preparedness, the 2009 workplan will focus on completion of TPH preparedness activities (see Attachment 2). These include policies and procedures, documentation tools, draft communications, draft education tools etc.

CONTACT

Dr. Lisa Berger
Associate Medical Officer of Health
Tel: 416-338-7983
E-mail: lberger@toronto.ca

Dr. Barbara Yaffe
Director, Communicable Disease Control
& Associate Medical Officer of Health
Tel: 416-392-7405 E-mail byaffe@toronto.ca

SIGNATURE

Dr. David McKeown
Medical Officer of Health

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Toronto Public Health Pandemic Influenza Status (2008)

Attachment 2: Toronto Public Health Pandemic Influenza Workplan (2009)