

Communications Office

Peterborough County-City Health Unit
10 Hospital Drive
Peterborough, ON K9J 8M1
(705) 743-1000, ext. 391
www.pcchu.ca



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, March 10, 2011, Peterborough

Health Unit Reports Seasonal Influenza Vaccine Uptake By Local Health Care Workers

Vaccine Coverage Rates Range from 11% to 98% at Local Health Care Facilities

At last night's Board of Health meeting, the Peterborough County-City Health Unit reported the rates of seasonal influenza vaccine uptake by health care workers (HCWs), including those who work in long-term care homes, retirement residences, and the hospital.

"Immunization rates at health care facilities are an important measure of the level of protection against seasonal influenza for the most vulnerable populations in our community," said Dr. Rosana Pellizzari, Medical Officer of Health who tabled this report for the first time at the Health Unit. "I am concerned about the low HCW immunization rates in many facilities because we know that influenza can be life-threatening for seniors and those with chronic conditions."

Dr. Pellizzari commended Canterbury Gardens for having the highest HCW vaccination rate of all local health care facilities at 98%. She noted a number of other long-term care facilities also have strong HCW immunization rates above 80%, such as Empress Gardens, St. Joseph's at Fleming and Pleasant Meadow Manor.

The report included a number of recommendations to improve HCW immunization rates, such as that the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MOHLTC) include annual institutional HCW influenza immunization rates as an indicator within publicly reported Ontario Patient Safety Initiatives. Dr. Pellizzari appealed to all HCWs to get their annual flu vaccination as this could also help mitigate workload issues at health care facilities by keeping more staff healthy and reducing sick time coverage.

In Peterborough County and City, 42 community cases of laboratory-confirmed influenza were reported since November 1, 2010 until February 28, 2011. A total of four influenza outbreaks were also reported in long-term care facilities for the same time period.

Influenza can result in widespread illness, including outbreaks and pandemics. It is associated with complications such as bacterial pneumonia and death. Annual immunization of persons at high risk, and of HCWs and others, who are capable of

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transmitting influenza to those at risk, is the most effective measure for reducing the impact of influenza.

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For further information, please contact:

Sarah McBride. RN
Vaccine Preventable Disease Program
(705) 743-1000, ext. 345