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6. Immunization

Vaccines are the most effective means to prevent disease and death from influenza during a pandemic; however, it will take six months after the pandemic strain is identified to develop a vaccine so it will likely not be available for the first wave. This complex process cannot begin until the pandemic begins and the new virus has been identified. This means that a vaccine will probably not be available when the first wave of the pandemic strikes Canada.

The effectiveness of the vaccine (once developed) against the pandemic strain is unknown, but vaccines for seasonal influenza usually prevent illness in 70 to 90% of healthy adults.

Canada is one of the few countries in the world prepared to have a vaccine manufacturer develop and supply a pandemic influenza vaccine as soon as a new strain is identified. Under a 10-year contract signed in 2001 between the Government of Canada and ID Biomedical (now GlaxoSmithKline Biologicals), the company will be able to produce enough vaccine for all Canadians in the event of an influenza pandemic. There is a global effort to develop prototype pandemic vaccines, including H5N1 vaccines, as part of pandemic preparedness.

6.1 Objectives

1. To ensure the security of vaccine supply allotted to the PCCHU from the MOHLTC.
2. To store, distribute, allocate and administer vaccine supplies efficiently and appropriately.
3. To monitor the safety and effectiveness of vaccine programs.

6.1.a Immunization Strategies

As directed by the MOHLTC, the PCCHU offers free seasonal influenza immunization to anyone in the Peterborough County and City over the age of six months with no contraindications to influenza immunization since the fall of 2000. The program, known as the Universal Influenza Immunization Program (UIIP), provides approximately five to six million doses of trivalent influenza vaccine a year to residents of Ontario. Pharmacies, physicians, long term care facilities, employers, nursing agencies, retirement residences, also receive vaccine to administer to clients.

The federal government is responsible for vaccine procurement, licensing, distributing, prioritization recommendations, data requirements, and determining a start date for vaccination activities.

The provincial government (through the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC)), are responsible for ordering vaccine through federal contracts, developing and implementing a provincial immunization strategy, support public health units, develop and evaluation process with Public Health Ontario and participate in the federal/provincial/territorial (FPT) coordination process.

Section 6: Immunization

Public Health Ontario will analyze immunization data to assess vaccination coverage rates, assess adverse events following immunizations and provide scientific advice to the provincial government.

Public health units will develop and implement a regional pandemic immunization program. This will include identification and engagement/support of local vaccine delivery agents, inventory management of vaccine, communications to health care providers and the public, administer vaccine, and participate in the evaluation process.

Vaccine delivery agents (nurses, physicians, pharmacists, etc.) administer vaccine to clients/patients/residents, health sector employers and health workers. They report immunization data to the provincial government.

If the Health Unit determines that additional clinics are required to supplement the pharmacy-run vaccine clinics, the Health Unit will use the PCCHU Mass Vaccination Plan Appendix.