

**TITLE: Public Health Support for including Hepatitis A Vaccine in the School Immunization Program**

**SPONSOR: Peterborough Public Health**

WHEREAS hepatitis A is a viral liver disease that can cause mild to severe illness, and according to the World Health Organization (2018), epidemics that can be difficult to control and cause substantial economic loss; and

WHEREAS recent hepatitis A outbreaks have been reported in Ontario and through-out North America, related to infected food handlers and to food products (strawberries, scallops, pomegranate seeds, organic berries) ; amongst men who have sex with men; people who use illicit drugs, and people experiencing homelessness<sup>2</sup>; and

WHEREAS hepatitis A is one of the most common vaccine preventable diseases in travellers. Protection against hepatitis A is recommended for all travellers to hepatitis A endemic countries; and

WHEREAS recovery from hepatitis A infection may take months, with about 25% of adult cases requiring hospitalization, resulting, in Ontario (2016/2017) with potential hospital stays costing is over \$5300 per person; and

WHEREAS in 2018, 12 million Canadians reported travel to overseas countries; and

WHEREAS studies estimate that 44% to 55% of reported HA cases in Canada are linked to travel with low-budget travellers, volunteer humanitarian workers, and Canadian-born children of new Canadians returning to their country of origin to visit friends and relatives being at highest risk<sup>6</sup>; and

WHEREAS immunization is a cost-effective health intervention that reduces the burden on the health care system and offsets the high costs of doctor visits, trips to the emergency room, hospitalizations, medication therapy and outbreak management; and

WHEREAS pre-exposure hepatitis A immunization is at least 90% to 97% effective with protective concentrations of hepatitis A antibody likely persisting for at least 20 years, possibly for life, following immunization with 2 doses of hepatitis A-containing vaccine; and

WHEREAS increasing access to publicly funded vaccinations such as those offered in school clinics improves health equity and reduces disparities in immunization coverage across communities; and

WHEREAS combined vaccines result in fewer injections, fewer office visits, more convenience for clients, simplified logistics and increased compliance; and

- WHEREAS a combined hepatitis A/B vaccine could easily be implemented in the existing school-based clinic schedule provided in conjunction with the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine at 0 and 6 months; and
- WHEREAS there is no increase in adverse events with the combined hepatitis A/B vaccine when compared with the hepatitis A vaccine given alone or concomitantly with the hepatitis B vaccine; and
- WHEREAS the logistics and the related costs to adding a combined vaccine would be nil or minimal for the current Ontario school-based vaccine program and would further be reduced through bulk purchasing; and
- WHEREAS the process of obtaining consent for the combined hepatitis A/B vaccine may be easy to update given that information on hepatitis is already included in the current package and thus, would require minimal modification; and
- WHEREAS a goal of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's Immunization 2020 – Modernizing Ontario Publicly Funded Immunization Program (2015), is to improve access to immunizations by offering additional vaccines and catch-up immunizations for school-aged children and adolescents through school-based immunization clinics<sup>9</sup>;

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa) endorse the replacement of the hepatitis B vaccine in the school-based program with the combined hepatitis A/B vaccine;

**AND FURTHER** that alPHa request that the provincial Government include the combined hepatitis A/B vaccine in the provincially funded immunization program as a way to reduce vaccine-preventable diseases and promote the health of all Ontarians;

**AND FURTHER** that the Premier of Ontario, the Chief Medical Officer of Health for Ontario, the Ontario Public Health Association and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care be so advised.

***ACTION FROM CONFERENCE: Carried***

#### **References – Resolution A19-5**

<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization (2018). Available from: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/hepatitis-a>

<sup>2</sup> Public Health Ontario (2019). Monthly Infectious Diseases Surveillance Report (February 2019). Available from: [https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/surveillance-reports/surveillance-report-infectious-diseases-jan-dec-2018.pdf?\\_cldee=YXRhbm5hQHBJY2h1LmNh&recipientid=contact-4b1b4f0d4ab1e411bbf30050569e0009-e8e486622bdd4328a78300abe0c2ad02&esid=cbd675d2-bb24-e911-ab0a-0050569e0009](https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/surveillance-reports/surveillance-report-infectious-diseases-jan-dec-2018.pdf?_cldee=YXRhbm5hQHBJY2h1LmNh&recipientid=contact-4b1b4f0d4ab1e411bbf30050569e0009-e8e486622bdd4328a78300abe0c2ad02&esid=cbd675d2-bb24-e911-ab0a-0050569e0009)

<sup>3</sup> Canadian Immunization Guide. Part 4 active vaccines: Hepatitis A vaccine  
<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/canadian-immunization-guide-part-4-active-vaccines>

<sup>4</sup> Canadian Institute for Health Information (2019) Available from:  
[https://yourhealthsystem.cihi.ca/hsp/inbrief?lang=en#!/indicators/015/cost-of-a-standard-hospital-stay;/mapC1;mapLevel2;provinceC5001;trend\(C1,C5001\);/](https://yourhealthsystem.cihi.ca/hsp/inbrief?lang=en#!/indicators/015/cost-of-a-standard-hospital-stay;/mapC1;mapLevel2;provinceC5001;trend(C1,C5001);/)

<sup>5</sup> Statistics Canada (2018). Travel between Canada and other countries, December 2018. Available from:  
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/190221/dq190221c-eng.htm>

<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Health and Long Term Care. Immunization 2020: Modernizing Ontario's Publicly Funded Immunization Program (2015). Available from:  
[http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/ministry/publications/reports/immunization\\_2020/immunization\\_2020\\_report.pdf](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/ministry/publications/reports/immunization_2020/immunization_2020_report.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2018): Hepatitis A Questions and Answers for Health Professionals Available from: <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/outbreaks/hepatitisaoutbreaks.htm>

<sup>8</sup> Bakker, M et al. (2016) Immunogenicity, effectiveness and safety of combined hepatitis A and B vaccine: a systematic literature review, Expert Review of Vaccines, 15:7, 829-851.

<sup>9</sup> Ministry Health of Health and Long Term Care Publicly Funded Immunization Schedules for Ontario – December 2016. Available from:  
[http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/immunization/docs/immunization\\_schedule.pdf](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/immunization/docs/immunization_schedule.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Canadian Immunization Guide. Part 4 active vaccines: Hepatitis B vaccine  
<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/canadian-immunization-guide-part-4-active-vaccines/page-7-hepatitis-b-vaccine.html#a10>

<sup>11</sup> Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (2019). Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices for Use of Hepatitis A Vaccine for Persons Experiencing Homelessness. Available from: <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/68/wr/mm6806a6.htm>

<sup>12</sup> Public Health Ontario (2019). Public health responses to recent hepatitis A outbreaks: Spotlight on San Diego County, California and Middlesex-London, Ontario: Introduction. Available from:  
<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/presentations/grand-rounds-january-15-2019.pdf?la=fr>

<sup>13</sup> Quebec Immunisation Program: <https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/advice-and-prevention/vaccination/hepatitis-a-and-b-vaccine/>