

TITLE: Inclusion of Health Care Worker Influenza Immunization Rates in Acute Care Facilities as an Indicator of Patient Safety

SPONSOR: Board of Health of the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit

WHEREAS member organizations within the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa) are required by the Ontario Public Health Standards to “influence the development of healthy public policy and its programs and services to reduce or eliminate the burden of vaccine preventable diseases” and ensure “target coverage rates for provincially funded immunizations are achieved”; and

WHEREAS influenza vaccination is the cornerstone of influenza prevention²; and

WHEREAS the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recommends that influenza immunization programs target those “capable of transmitting influenza to individuals at high risk of complications and those who provide essential community services (including) healthcare and other care providers in facilities and community settings”; and

WHEREAS both symptomatic and asymptomatic influenza-infected health care workers (HCWs) can transmit influenza to vulnerable patients; and

WHEREAS HCWs influenza vaccination rates in hospitals have remained low over the three decades that HCWs influenza vaccination has been recommended; and

WHEREAS seasonal influenza vaccination of HCWs has demonstrated 20 – 44% reductions in all causes of mortality of residents in long-term care facilities; and

WHEREAS as the percentage of vaccinated HCWs increases, healthcare-associated influenza infection decreases; and

WHEREAS influenza immunization of HCWs protects vulnerable patients and improves patient safety; and

WHEREAS the transmission of influenza in healthcare settings are a significant safety concern that places patients and staff at risk; and

WHEREAS NACI, the Ontario Hospital Association, the Ontario Medical Association, and many other health care organizations consider influenza vaccination of HCWs as an essential component of the standard of care for the protection of their patients; and

WHEREAS NACI states “HCWs who have direct patient contact should consider it their responsibility to provide the highest standard of care, which includes annual influenza vaccination. In the absence of contraindications, refusal of HCWs who have direct patient contact to be immunized against influenza implies failure in their duty of care to patients”; and

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WHEREAS ALPHA had passed a currently unresolved resolution urging introduction of provincial legislation mandating annual vaccination against influenza for all health care workers and other service providers in facilities and community settings; and

WHEREAS Ontario's acute care Patient Safety Indicators were introduced in 2008 to reduce the risk factors that contribute to the spread of infections; and

WHEREAS shared disclosure of HCW vaccination rates in acute care facilities as a component of patient safety has been shown to significantly improve influenza immunization rates among HCWs;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Association of Local Public Health Agencies requests that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care in consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health to include healthcare worker influenza immunization rates in hospitals as a publicly reported Patient Safety Indicator as a means of protecting the health of patients by improving influenza vaccination rates among health care workers in hospitals.

ACTION FROM CONFERENCE: **Resolution CARRIED**