

TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Bryna Warshawsky, Acting Medical Officer of Health

DATE: 2013 March 21

2012-2013 STAFF INFLUENZA IMMUNIZATION RATES IN HOSPITALS AND LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES

Recommendation

It is recommended that Report No. 042-13 re “2012-2013 Staff Influenza Immunization Rates in Hospitals and Long Term Care Facilities” be received for information.

Key Points

- The influenza vaccine is the best way to prevent illness from influenza. Vaccination of health care providers against influenza helps protect the vulnerable populations they serve.
- In Ontario, hospitals and long term care facilities are required to report staff influenza immunization rates to the public health. Making staff influenza immunization rates public is one strategy to increase these rates.
- In London and Middlesex County, rates of staff influenza immunization vary widely between facilities. As of January 17, 2013, the median staff influenza immunization rates were 56.6% in hospitals and 75.5% in long term care facilities.

Background

Yearly influenza vaccination is the most important and effective strategy to prevent influenza illness and its complications. Since the introduction of the Universal Influenza Immunization Program in 2000, all people six months and over who live or work in Ontario have been eligible for free influenza vaccination. The influenza vaccine is particularly important for people at high risk for influenza complications such as young children, older adults and those with compromised immune systems, as well as people capable of transmitting influenza to those at high risk, including health care and other care providers in facilities and community settings.

To be in compliance with the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, hospitals and long term care facilities are required to report staff influenza immunization rates to the public health. There are eight hospitals and 21 long term care facilities in Middlesex-London. This season, staff influenza immunization rates were provided up to January 17, 2013. [Appendix A](#) provides the staff influenza immunization rates in hospitals and [Appendix B](#) provides the influenza immunization rates for staff of long-term care facilities.

These rates are being made public for the first time to assist in promoting staff immunization in these facilities. Other strategies to increase staff influenza immunization have recently been implemented. In British Columbia, health care providers are required to be immunized or to wear a mask throughout the influenza season. As well, Public Health Ontario indicated that annual influenza vaccination should be a condition of continued employment in, or appointment to, health care organizations (see page 32 of [Best Practices for Infection Prevention and Control](#)...).

Healthcare Institution Staff Influenza Immunization Rates:

As of January 17, 2013, the median percent of staff immunized against influenza in hospitals was 56.6%. This means that for half of the hospitals in Middlesex-London, the percentage of staff who received influenza immunization was higher than this value, and for the other half, the percentage was lower than this value.

Specific percentages ranged from a low of 50.7% to a high of 62.6%, depending on the hospital. Please refer to [Appendix A](#) for details.

As of January 17, 2013, the median percent of staff immunized against influenza in long term care facilities was 75.5%. This means that for half of the long term care facilities in Middlesex-London, the percentage of staff who received influenza immunization was higher than this value, and for the other half, the percentage was lower than this value.

Specific percentages ranged from a low of 46.7% to a high of 95.8%, depending on the long-term care facility. Refer to [Appendix B](#) for details.

Conclusion/Next Steps

The 2012-2013 influenza season has seen a record number of laboratory-confirmed cases, hospitalizations, institutional outbreaks and deaths in the Middlesex-London Health Unit's jurisdiction (see [Report No. 012-13](#)). Significant efforts occur in hospitals and long term care facilities to promote staff immunizations as a strategy to protect patients and residents. Nonetheless, staff immunization rates are variable and, in some facilities, less than optimal. Publicly releasing the staff immunization rates for each facility may assist in raising rates by serving as an incentive for the facility. Other strategies are also being used to increase staff immunization rates such as making influenza vaccine a condition of employment or requiring masks to be worn for those staff who are unimmunized. Mandatory influenza immunization would also lead to significant increases in staff immunization rates. The Health Unit will continue to work with community partners on strategies to elevate influenza immunization rates.

This report was prepared by Mr. Tristan Squire-Smith, Manager, Infectious Disease Control Team; Ms. Hilary Caldarelli, Contract Epidemiologist; and Ms. Alison Locker, Epidemiologist, Oral Health, Communicable Disease and Sexual Health Services. The Health Unit recognizes the contributions of all healthcare facilities in collecting and submitting staff influenza immunization rates.



Bryna Warshawsky, MDCM, CCFP, FRCPC
Acting Medical Officer of Health

This report addresses the following requirements of the Ontario Public Health Standards:

Vaccine Preventable Diseases and Infectious Disease Prevention and Control.