

**Ministry of Health
and Long-Term Care**

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April 13, 2013

MEMORANDUM

TO : Medical Officers of Health and Associate Medical Officers of Health

RE: Influenza A(H7N9) Virus in China

Dear Colleagues,

On April 1, 2013, the World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed that individuals in China had been infected with influenza A(H7N9).

Influenza A(H7N9) viruses normally circulate among birds. Human infections with avian influenza are rare but have occurred in the past, most commonly after exposure to infected poultry. This is the first time that this avian influenza A subtype (H7N9) has been found in humans.

There is no vaccine currently available for this subtype of influenza virus. Preliminary test results provided by the WHO Collaborating Centre in China suggest that the virus is susceptible to neuraminidase inhibitors (i.e., oseltamivir and zanamivir).

To date, no cases of human infection with the H7N9 virus have been identified outside of China. The risk posed to Ontarians by this virus is considered low at this time based on the lack of confirmed human-to-human transmission and the geographic distribution of illness detection.

Although the risk is low, health care providers should consider the possibility of novel influenza A(H7N9) virus infection in persons with respiratory illness that meet the exposure criteria, such as recent travel to China. Attached is the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (ministry) guidance document on influenza A(H7N9) for health workers and health sector employers with information on what to be on the lookout for, laboratory testing and treatment recommendations, and appropriate occupational health & safety and infection prevention & control measures. This document will be posted on the ministry website once the translation has been completed. We will provide you with an update on the status of its posting during the health sector partner teleconferences that have been arranged for Monday, April 15th, 2013.

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There are a number of resources that health workers and health sector employers can turn to for more information on the influenza A(H7N9) virus:

- World Health Organization's [Disease Outbreak News Website](#)
- Public Health Agency of Canada's [Public Health Notice on the H7N9 avian flu in China](#)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [Website on Influenza A\(H7N9\)](#)
- Nature's summary of [a fatal case caused by novel H7N9 avian influenza A virus in China](#)

Please disseminate this memo and the attached guidance document to your health sector partners.

Regards,

Original signed by

Arlene King, MD, MHSc, FRCPC
Chief Medical Officer of Health