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RE: 2019/20 Influenza Season Update

All manufacturers supplying Canada with influenza vaccine experienced supply disruptions at the start of flu season. The national flu vaccine shortage has since been resolved; however, there continues to be delays in the delivery of flu vaccines to health care providers. Every effort is being made to ensure timely delivery. For supply and delivery updates, please continue to refer to www.Manitoba.ca/fludistribution.

Epidemiology:

As of October 23rd 2019, overall influenza activity level in Manitoba is low. Since September, sporadic lab-confirmed influenza cases have been reported. Nationally, influenza activity remains at inter-seasonal levels however, the number of regions in Canada reporting influenza activity is increasing. The Province will post online (www.gov.mb.ca/flu) seasonal (biweekly/weekly) surveillance reports beginning November 1st to identify and monitor the arrival of influenza, its geographic spread, intensity of activity, characteristics of those infected as well as severity and changing trends.

Respiratory illness activity is increasing, according to syndromic indicators, and is within expected levels at this time of a year. Other respiratory viruses are co-circulating. In the last few weeks, rhinovirus has been the most frequently detected virus in all respiratory detections by laboratory testing.

Vaccine Eligibility:

Clinicians are encouraged to offer the flu vaccine to all Manitobans six months of age and older. An annual flu vaccine is especially important for those at increased risk of serious illness from the flu, their caregivers and close contacts. Manitobans over the age of 65 should also get a Pneu-P-23 vaccine at the same time as the flu vaccine. Most people need only one dose but some people living with certain medical conditions require a second dose and/or a dose of Pneu-C-13 vaccine. Refer to Manitoba's vaccine eligibility criteria as well as the Canadian Immunization Guide for individual patient eligibility and recommendations.

The high-dose inactivated influenza vaccine (Fluzone® High-Dose) has been delivered to long-term care facilities (LTCF) for residents aged 65 years and older, including chronic care residents. Clients in interim/transitional care beds, respite care clients as well as new, unimmunized residents admitted to a LTCF should get Fluzone® High-Dose. **Note:** the nasal spray format (FluMist® Quadrivalent) is not available in Canada.

Testing:

A wide variety of upper respiratory tract symptoms and viruses can be seen and detected during fall and winter months. Testing is generally not indicated for most respiratory virus manifestations, as testing does not add value to fundamental prevention and management strategies in the outpatient setting. Persons presenting with influenza-like illness*, with underlying risk factors for severe disease or already presenting with symptoms that may require hospital admission, should be tested. The standard specimen to be collected is a nasopharyngeal flocculated swab placed in viral transport medium (VTM), and submitted to Cadham Provincial Laboratory (CPL) using the CPL General Requisition. In some institutions, testing may be partially completed on site before being forwarded to CPL.

**Influenza-like illness (ILI) is characterized as: acute onset of respiratory illness with fever and cough and with one or more of the following: sore throat, arthralgia, myalgia and/or prostration. In children < 5 years of age, gastrointestinal symptoms (e.g., nausea, vomiting, diarrhea) may be present. In patients < 5 years or ≥ 65 years old, fever may not be prominent.*

Prevention, management and treatment:

Manitoba's Communicable Disease Management **Protocol** for Influenza (August 2016) can be found at: <https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/protocol/influenza1.pdf>.

Clinicians are encouraged to refer to the foundation document for practitioners (updated 2019) by the **Association of Medical Microbiology and Infectious (AMMI) Diseases Canada** for information on the use of antiviral drugs for the prevention and treatment of influenza (<https://jammi.utpjournals.press/doi/pdf/10.3138/jammi.2019.02.08>).

Please share this information with all relevant colleagues in your facility or clinic.

Sincerely,



Dr. Brent Roussin,
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Chief Provincial Public Health Officer, Population Health Division