

October 17, 2017

Dear Colleagues,

As healthcare leaders in Alberta, we are committed to improving patient/client safety and employee health by reducing the impact of seasonal influenza.

Influenza is ranked among the top 10 infectious diseases affecting the Canadian population. Last year there were 187 outbreaks in Alberta health care facilities. As well, 64 Albertans died related to influenza infection.

The health practitioner immunization rate in Alberta rose from 61% in the 2015/16 season to 63% in the 2016/2017 season. With all the effort and interventions to increase health practitioner rates, we have seen an increase; however, the immunization rate is far below the target. The ultimate goal is for every health practitioner, who is able to receive vaccine, to be immunized.

Preventing healthcare-associated transmission of influenza protects patients/clients, health practitioners, and our communities. As influenza spreads easily from person to person, health practitioners have a duty to limit the transmission of influenza to their patients/clients. The most effective way to prevent the transmission is annual influenza immunization. The National Advisory Committee on Immunization states, "Influenza immunization is an essential component of the standard of care for all healthcare workers for the protection of patients". In addition, immunizing health practitioners prevents lost work time during outbreaks which would negatively impact patient care.

To promote the health and safety of patients/clients and our workforce, we encourage all health practitioners, health professionals, physicians, and volunteers to receive annual influenza vaccine. Our goal is to maintain a healthy workforce by increasing influenza immunization rates, reducing employee absenteeism during influenza season, and reducing transmission of influenza from health practitioners to patients.

As leaders in healthcare, you are integral to the success of the influenza immunization program.

Regards,



Deena Hinshaw, Acting Chief MCH

for Karen Grimsrud, MD, MHSc, FACPM  
Chief Medical Officer of Health  
Alberta Health

Regards,



Gerry Predy, MD, FRCPC  
Senior Medical Officer of Health  
Alberta Health Services