

News Release

Government of Canada announces two initiatives to support healthcare workers in treating and preventing H1N1

August 27, 2009

(OTTAWA)—The Government of Canada today announced two key initiatives to support healthcare professionals in treating and preventing H1N1 flu virus infections in Canada.

"Canadian healthcare workers will have the tools they need to safely and effectively prevent and treat H1N1," said Health Minister Leona Aglukkaq. "We are continuing to follow our pandemic preparedness plan by collaborating with all levels of government to protect and support our frontline workers."

The two initiatives are:

- The Public Health Agency of Canada is mobilizing public health officials, intensive care specialists and medical experts from Canada and abroad to meet in Winnipeg next week to share and discuss best practices for treating severe H1N1 infections.
- The Public Health Agency of Canada and the Canadian Institutes for Health Research are providing an additional \$2.7 million to the Influenza Research Network to evaluate the safety and efficacy of the pandemic vaccine, as well as to monitor and evaluate vaccine implementation programs.

The international meeting in Winnipeg, scheduled for Sept. 2-3, will help strengthen important linkages between health care professionals dealing with severe cases of H1N1 flu infection and public health experts engaged in planning for the possible second wave of H1N1 in the fall.

"This meeting is an opportunity for frontline health workers and public health officials to collaborate and identify some key challenges and strategies for the fall," said Dr. David-Butler-Jones, Canada's Chief Public Health Officer. "Coming out of this meeting, we aim to have new guidelines on treatment and management of severe cases, as well as some guidance on issues like identifying surge capacity for hospitals during a more severe outbreak."

One of the key elements of the Canadian Pandemic Influenza Plan moving into the fall is ensuring that every Canadian who needs and wants it has access to the pandemic vaccine. The Government of Canada recently announced its intention to purchase 50.4 million doses of pandemic vaccine (Link to Aug 6 release), and to fund 60 per cent of this purchase on behalf of the provinces and territories.

The delivery of immunization programs is a provincial/territorial responsibility. However, the Government of Canada is providing support to help provinces and territories deliver effective immunization programs, and to monitor the safety and efficacy of the vaccine on a national scale.

To this end, the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Canadian Institutes for Health Research will be providing an additional \$2.7 million to further support the PHAC/CIHR Influenza Research Network (PCIRN) (link to June 5 release).

“These additional research projects being led by the Influenza Research Network will boost capacity across the country to effectively monitor and evaluate the pandemic vaccine and its delivery,” said CIHR President, Dr. Alan Beaudet.

The Network will be led by Dr. Scott Halperin, Director of the Canadian Centre for Vaccinology in Halifax, and will involve 80 scientists from 30 research and public health institutions across Canada. These new projects are directly applicable to the H1N1 flu virus and will address vaccine coverage, vaccine safety and vaccine effectiveness.

For more info on the conference, Severe H1N1 Disease: Preventing Cases, Reducing Mortality, please visit: <http://www.nml-lnm.gc.ca/icu-h1n1-usi/index-eng.htm>

For more info on the H1N1 flu virus, please visit: www.fightflu.ca