

Media Release

April 27, 2009

Kingston hospitals on alert for flu outbreak

Together, Kingston General Hospital, Hotel Dieu Hospital and Providence Care have mobilized our organizations to deal with potential local or regional cases related to an outbreak of “influenza-like cases” in Mexico and certain parts of the United States referred to as swine flu or Severe Respiratory Illness (SRI).

The Kingston hospitals are well prepared to deal with a possible influenza pandemic and are following procedures and action plans outlined in their joint Pandemic Influenza Plan. Our response team is being led by Dr. Dick Zoutman, Medical Director of Infection Prevention and Control and an expert in infectious diseases who also co-chairs the Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee, and Ted Darby, Vice-President of Planning. Both Dr. Zoutman and Darby share joint leadership across KGH, Hotel Dieu and Providence Care.

The Kingston hospitals are leaders in tracking the spread of influenza within our region and have already enacted various surveillance and prevention tools at each of our sites. Also, KGH, Hotel Dieu and Providence Care have a comprehensive pandemic plan and storage of significant supplies to continue the hospitals’ day-to-day operations.

Hospital leaders are in daily contact with government and public health officials to get the latest information on this situation and take appropriate actions as required. We are also liaising with our various health-care and first-responder partners within the South East Local Health Integration Network to ensure a coordinated approach and response.

Area residents who may be experiencing symptoms or signs of influenza (including high fever, cough, eye pain, shortness of breath and extreme fatigue) and who have travelled outside of Canada within the last 14 days are asked to call Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000 for health advice. KFL&A Public Health has set up a dedicated phone line, staffed by a public health nurse, to answer questions about swine flu at 613-549-5923 and will also post regular updates to its website at www.kflapublichealth.ca.

The public is asked to do their part to help stop the spread of infection by practising frequent and vigilant hand cleaning, covering coughs and sneezes with tissues and/or their sleeve/elbow and staying home if they are sick.

Patient and staff safety is the Kingston hospitals' top priority. Together, we will continue to take every precaution to ensure appropriate interventions and communications occur as needed.

Working together, Kingston's university hospitals provide a continuum of specialized health care in this region. Our organizations offer leading edge clinical care, pioneering research and outstanding teaching opportunities through their affiliation with Queen's University. These dynamic partnerships translate into quality care for our community.

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