

Board of Health

Monthly Report- January 24, 2002

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CONTACT US:
We welcome your comments and suggestions for the Board Report at board@healthunit.org

Local Influenza Pandemic Planning

Submitted by, Laurie O'Reilly, Public Health Nurse and Dr. C. Gardner, Medical Officer of Health

An influenza pandemic is essentially an influenza outbreak occurring on a global scale. A pandemic can occur when influenza viruses exchange genetic material with one another. This can result in the emergence of "new" influenza viruses to which the population has no immunity. Throughout human history, influenza pandemics have resulted in elevated rates of illness and death around the world. Three influenza pandemics have occurred in the last century alone. Most notably, the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918 resulted in an estimated 20 million deaths worldwide.



Past pandemics have occurred at varying intervals with no recognizable pattern making it impossible to determine when the next one will occur. However, it is generally agreed upon by infectious diseases experts that the potential exists for 'new' influenza viruses to emerge making future influenza pandemics likely. The impact of an influenza pandemic on the health of local residents could be devastating with up to 27,000 people requiring outpatient care, 500 requiring hospitalization and as many as 200 deaths.

In May 2001, the Health Unit established a Pandemic Influenza Planning Committee whose primary responsibility was to develop a local contingency plan. The individuals chosen for this committee included a variety of stakeholders with expertise essential for local planning. To date, we have completed our plan and we are currently working in partnership with Emergency Measures Ontario to organize a testing scenario to be conducted in the spring of 2002.

Our 'Contingency Plan for Pandemic Influenza for Leeds, Grenville and Lanark' is available on our website at www.healthunit.org. Comments and suggestions are always appreciated.

SCIP Participation Pays off

Submitted by Joanne Pearce, Director of Corporate Services



In 1998, the Health Unit took part in the *Safe Communities Incentive Program (SCIP)*. Initially this involved five weeks of group training with other local employers in the *Safe Workplace Awareness Program*, followed by an audit of the in-house healthy and safety practices, policies and procedures. A report was completed to assist with the development of the work-plan for the following year. Each subsequent year, evidence has been provided to demonstrate our agency's commitment to provide a safe and healthy workplace for our staff. In October 2001, we received our third consecutive SCIP rebate for a three (3) year total of \$8,558. WSIB experience rebates for the same three year period total \$6,715. We continue to be rewarded for our commitment to health and safety.

Infant Feeding Manual Sent to All Family Physicians

Submitted by Dianne Oickle, Public Health Nutritionist and Lois Byington, Public Health Nurse



As a way to address infant feeding myths, an infant feeding resource was distributed in early November to all family physicians in Leeds, Grenville, and Lanark counties. Additional copies were sent to Registered Dietitians, hospital physician lounges, hospital emergency rooms, maternity wards, and community partners i.e., Connections. The resource, called "A Guide to Infant Feeding: From Birth to 24 Months" is an infant feeding manual that gives current recommendations and guidelines at various stages of infant feeding. This resource was sent jointly by Dianne Oickle, the Public Health Nutritionist and Dr. Gardner, the Medical Officer of Health. The goal of the infant feeding manual was to provide current research-based infant feeding guidelines to health professionals who deal with infants and families so that the community is receiving consistent messages about nutrition, breastfeeding, and infant feeding in general.

Section One, which covers ages 0-4 months, is an in-depth discussion of breastfeeding, including details on feeding and technique. There is also information included on artificial baby milk (infant formula). Section Two, which covers ages 4-12 months, is an outline of guidelines on introducing solids and other infant feeding issues. Section Three, which covers 12 months - 2 years, discusses toddler feeding issues, and nutritional concerns of toddlers. Each section contains a list of resources for parents available from the health unit, a section of suggested resources for professionals, and research references to support the recommendations.

A number of resources were also included in the manual. An Infant Feeding Resource Package included copies of Nutrition for Healthy Term Infants (national infant feeding guidelines), and a copy of Feeding Your Baby, the health unit's infant feeding resource for parents. A Reproductive Health Package included copies of Nutrition for Healthy Term Infants (national guidelines for nutrition in pregnancy) and copies of the health unit pamphlets on folic acid and weight gain in pregnancy.

Response from physicians has been positive. We have had a number of requests from physicians' offices and community health centres for copies of the resources to distribute to their clients.

Breastfeeding Services

Submitted by Lois Byington, Public Health Nurse



Health Unit breastfeeding services have, again this year, been augmented through monies received from the National Child Benefit Fund.

Proposals for funding were submitted to, and approved by both the Lanark, and the Leeds, Grenville advisory committees. Hospital grade breast pumps and disposable collection kits were purchased – four for Lanark and five for Leeds, Grenville. This brings the total available pumps up to seventeen.

These pumps are loaned to women living in our tri-county area who, for medical reasons, are unable to nurse their babies and for whom the cost of pump rental would present a financial hardship. These pumps are in almost constant use, at times only being dropped off at the health unit to be cleaned and readied for the next client. These families are closely followed by a public health nurse who offers expertise and support.

It has been a pleasure to be able to provide this service to area families who recognize that mother's milk is the normal and preferred nutrition for their infants.

"Go for Gold"

Submitted by Yves Decoste, Public Health Nurse

This year, National Non-Smoking Week will be from January 20th to 26th.

There is no national theme selected for this year, but a provincial initiative will be launched that week. The theme is "Go for Gold". It will involve a website covering no smoking bylaws throughout Ontario and challenging municipalities who haven't done so to offer the gold standard to protect health as it relates to tobacco bylaws. The map will highlight recent successes like the one in Ottawa and will also make available copies of/or highlights of other municipal by-laws that restrict smoking.

Tobacco Use Prevention Tool

Submitted by Yves Decoste, Public Health Nurse

Lungs are for Life, a popular and successful program that was developed in 1984 by the Lung Association, was revised in 2000. It focuses on meeting the expectations of the new school curriculum as well as the Health Unit's mandatory services guidelines. Teachers and health professionals who work with students developed the educational units. It is designed to help students develop the skills they will need to prevent them from smoking or from using other harmful substances. Each school in the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark area will be provided a binder containing all of the *Lungs are for Life* lesson plans and resources in January 2002.

Quit and Win 2002

Submitted by Yves Decoste, Public Health Nurse

The Ministry of Health and Long Term Care has funded the Quit & Win Smoking Contest again this year. In each of the last two years more than 10,000 smokers have registered provincially to quit smoking for a month, to be eligible to win great prizes. This year the contest will be launched in mid-February. Smokers will be asked to be smoke free for the month of April with announcement of the winner to coincide with World No Tobacco Day in May. Registration forms will be available from the Health Unit as well as online. Last year, close to 170 smokers from Leeds, Grenville and Lanark entered the contest.

Sodium levels in municipal drinking water supplies

Submitted by Marty Moir, Public Health Inspector

Sodium is an essential dietary element. The average Canadian consumes 5-6 grams of sodium per day without ill effect. Sodium intake can become a problem for patients suffering from hypertension, chronic kidney disease or congestive heart failure. Sodium restricted diets are often recommended for these patients. Drinking water can be a significant source of sodium consumption. While this is normally considered with regard to private well supplies, it may not be when patients are using municipally supplied drinking water. There are two points to consider when physicians are presented with patients in these circumstances.

Firstly, the natural concentration of sodium in the water supply may exceed the recommended maximum of 20 mg/l. The following communities are affected. Sodium levels are expressed as mg/l average.

LOCATION	SODIUM
Almonte	38
Kemptville	37
Lansdowne	78
Merrickville	31
Westport	56



Secondly, most groundwater supplies in our area have elevated hardness. In fact, water supplies in the previously mentioned communities are all considered to have hard or very hard water. As a result, many homeowners use water softeners to mitigate the effects of hardness. Most water softening equipment relies on ion exchange to remove units of hardness by replacing them with sodium. A typical water softener will add approximately .5mg/l of sodium for each mg/l of hardness removed. Depending upon the amount of hardness removed, this can result in significantly elevated sodium levels. This effect would be exacerbated in water that is naturally above the recommended maximum concentration for sodium.

We have notified area physicians that they may wish to advise those of their patients who are on sodium restricted diets (for medical reasons) and who live in the affected communities to use an alternate source of water for drinking or cooking. Those substituting bottled water should be advised to read the label carefully since some brands may have high levels of sodium, particularly mineral spring water. Products labelled as low sodium contain less than 5mg/l sodium. Patients who require sodium restricted diets should avoid consuming softened water whether municipal or private well in origin.