

# Open Letter to Nurses

Information for nurses working in the Winnipeg health region.

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## In this issue: Second Wave: Nursing Through H1N1

What an exciting and challenging time for health care services, nursing practice and to start a new job as your Chief Nursing Officer. In the midst of the second wave of H1N1, we have pulled together to keep things running as smoothly as possible and certainly rolled with the many changes that have occurred. This pandemic is a new scenario to everyone and while incredible planning has been done to get us through it, plans do need to be adjusted as we learn more and as the situation evolves. Many of you have worked long hours and picked up extra shifts to support our pandemic response. You've all been doing a fantastic job!

To the public, the immunization clinics are the most noticeable aspect of the H1N1 effort. But it is important for all of us to note that all parts of our system have been working simultaneously to ensure the pandemic strategy runs smoothly. Nurses working in their normal roles or volunteering to work in other areas have played major roles in these efforts.

- As in any pandemic situation, the role and leadership of public health is essential. Our success demonstrates the strength, skill and commitment of all public health nurses.

- Homecare developed special clinics by appointment for individuals, such as those with acquired brain injuries, who can't go to the mass clinics.

- As part of mobile clinics,

nurses have provided outreach and teaching about the importance of the vaccine, encouraging the shot to people at such unique locations as homeless shelters and bars on Main Street.

- Nurses in Emergency Departments have seen and cared for an increased number of people with influenza symptoms who come for treatment.

- Intensive care and inpatient units have also been busy caring for those who are ill and require hospital admission.

- Nurses in acute care have been providing immunizations to those in hospitals and to special populations including pregnant and postpartum women.

- Nurses in long term care have been working hard to admit individuals as quickly as possible to create capacity in acute care, as well as providing immunizations to residents.

- Infection Prevention and Control have coordinated vaccine supplies in hospitals in addition to their role of ensuring appropriate infection prevention and control precautions were in place to protect staff and others.

- Occupational health nurses provided staff immunization clinics and developed flu treatment

centers for staff.

- Nurses and other staff working at Health Links - Info Santé provided valuable information and advice to the public. There was a significant increase in the number of calls and the nurses have handled it all with tremendous grace under pressure.

- Behind the scenes there have been nurses and nurse managers helping to plan and develop tools and resources to ensure that staff has the supports, resources and knowledge they require to provide the needed services to the public.

The twelve mass vaccination clinics have been a marvel and a testament to the benefits of interprofessional and intersectoral collaboration. I have had the opportunity and the privilege to work alongside nurses and other staff who have made the biggest mass vaccination campaign in our province possible. I am extremely impressed and proud of the caring, compassion and professionalism that I have seen. In spite of sometimes long lines, cramped quarters and frequently changing information, nurses are assisting individuals and families to make informed decisions about





vaccination and providing needed care and education. It has been wonderful to see the nurses from Public Health, other community programs and the acute and long term care sectors working together to make this happen. It took an average of 284 nurses to staff the twelve clinics each day. The teamwork that has developed and the support and education that staff have provided to one another is incredible. The contribution of others to the teamwork cannot be overlooked.

- Mental Health nurses and other professionals were available to help individuals in line ups and at clinics who became anxious or upset.
- Clinical leads at each site were responsible for direction and support to all staff.
- Pharmacists and pharmacy technicians have ensured the vaccine was ready to meet the public demand.
- Staff and others working in the Community Disaster Operations Centre and Human Resources staffing and scheduling centre provided important direction and support to the clinics. They worked hard to ensure that the clinics functioned in a safe and

efficient manner.

- Medical Officers of Health, other physicians and allied health professionals also participated in the clinics.
- Volunteers, including retired nurses, were of enormous assistance in keeping things running smoothly.
- Nursing education institutions supported and assisted their student nurses in volunteering.
- Our nursing colleagues from the Manitoba Nurses Union and the College of Registered Nurses of Manitoba also joined the cause.

The professionalism and dedication of all nurses, other staff and volunteers involved has really demonstrated how the Winnipeg Health Region can and has pulled together to meet a challenge. This event has demonstrated the value of a coordinated system that can and does work together to ensure the emergent health needs of the public are met. I thank everyone for their contributions - without all of you we would not have managed to vaccinate over 225,000 individuals so far.

H1N1 has made the fall a very busy time for the Region and while the second wave is not yet over things do seem to be settling. It

doesn't seem possible that the holiday season is now here. I want to wish all nurses, staff, and volunteers of the Region very safe and healthy holidays. Enjoy your families and friends, celebrate life and congratulate yourselves on a job well done.

Best Wishes,

Lori Lamont

### Getting to Know You

Looking forward, my role as Chief Nursing Officer will include visiting sites, meeting with nurses in their workplaces, and visiting and attending nursing practice councils all in effort to get to know you - the nurses!

