



Open Letter to Nurses

Information for nurses working in the Winnipeg health region.

July 2009

In this issue: Nursing through H1N1 Influenza A

We know weather, no matter how rainy and dreary, eventually will turn to sunshine. We've come through a rough start to our summer in the Winnipeg region, but thankfully some clear summer days have come our way. We also started the summer with some tough health issues across the country and especially in our health region, but thankfully there are many roles of service providers helping in our battle against H1N1 Influenza A. Among the 28,000 health care staff all working diligently in our region, the 7,000 nurses across all sectors have had a broad scope of roles - all pivotal to make a difference during the current outbreak and in pandemic planning. The professionalism and flexibility of our nurses has been noted by many and the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority is proud to have each and every one of you to make up our exceptionally skilled team that continues to provide high quality care and services during this crucial time.

It's impossible in one letter to mention them all, but here are a few areas of nursing that have been vital in the response to H1N1 Influenza A:

Utilization: Handling the task of ensuring efficient and effective health care service use and facilitating patient flow through our health system.

Infection prevention and control practitioners: Ensuring infection prevention and control measures are based on emerging evidence related to H1N1 Influenza A. Providing education support and guidance to answer questions of staff, families and visitors. Offering communicable disease expertise to all sectors.

"This is what we're trained to do, but this (outbreak) has been a lot of load for our staff. They are committed individuals and are working together as a team and also closely with the public health program nurses. They're all doing a great job."

- Brenda Dyck, Program Director, Infection Prevention and Control.

Community health: Encompasses public health, primary care, home care, mental health.

Public health: Playing a lead role in the outbreak response and in surveillance of Severe Respiratory Illness (SRI). Providing education to clients, families, schools, and community partners. Contact tracing with patients exposed to H1N1 Influenza A to provide necessary support, education and referrals.

"Public Health Nurses have stepped up to play an important role in the pandemic response. Following case investigations, providing education, advice and reassurance - it is impressive to see their dedication to the community in a challenging situation."

- Sande Harlos, Chief Medical Officer of Health.

Family medicine-primary care: Providing influenza care, clinical assessments, support and health education in all primary care clinics. Ensuring individuals receive essential services to remain as healthy as possible and avoid hospitalization or emergency visits.

Home care: Facilitating discharges to the community as quickly as possible to ensure inpatient resources are available to those most in need. Caring for individuals in the community who present with influenza symptoms.

The region needs you, so...

Please Stay Healthy!

Prevent the spread of influenza to you or your family:

- Cover a cough or sneeze
- Wash your hands often with soap and water
- Limit touching of your eyes, nose or mouth
- Eat a healthy, balanced diet
- Avoid cigarette smoke and other harmful substances
- Be physically active when you can
- Get enough rest and sleep
- Get up-to-date information on H1N1 Influenza A at the H1N1 Influenza A pages on Insite at:

<http://home.wrha.mb.ca/news/influenza2009/index.php>

Mental health: Developing psychosocial response plans for community and workforce resilience. Offering psychological first aid and outreach supports.

Occupational health and safety: Making sure staff have access to up-to-date information on how best to protect themselves, what to do if exposed to or feeling symptoms of influenza. Taking a lead role in N95 mask fit testing.

Nursing leaders and managers: Ensuring up-to-date pandemic information and directions for staff. Ensuring units and services are safely staffed to meet patient needs and moving services, such as surgery, between sites.

Emergency department: Screening patients who present for care for influenza-type symptoms. Quickly instituting droplet and contact precautions when appropriate, and providing initial care to patients with SRI.

Critical care: Providing care to patients with SRI, particularly those requiring mechanical ventilation. Handling the notable increase in demand for services.

“There have been double the normal numbers of patients on respirators and those patients are often very sick, needing the

devotion of one nurse working long hours within an isolation cubicle, in gown, gloves, masks and eyeshield - it's exhaustive. The level of team work and hard work from critical care nurses and response from other nurses in the region has been great. Everyone wants to help each other, to help the patients.”

- Betty Lou Rock, Program Director, Critical Care Program.

Inpatient units: Providing continued quality patient care to all patients, including patients in the recovery phases of SRI.

Personal care home staff: Prioritizing hospital patients for PCH placement while continuing to provide high quality resident care.

Palliative care: Providing symptom management expertise to the region.

Women's health and child health: Caring for pregnant mothers, mothers, babies and children with H1N1 Influenza A, including children with SRI.

Nurse educators: Providing education on routine practices, infection control and prevention measures. Assisting in educating nurses deployed to other facilities and care areas. Being redeployed themselves - many taking shifts at the bedside to help provide care.

Health links nurses: Responding professionally to countless calls from concerned public. Providing education and referral advice to general public.

No matter where nurses work in our health region, all are playing a key role in the H1N1 Influenza A response. Many staff are working long hours and extra shifts responding to patient needs, both voluntarily and when redeployed from their normal work situation. The participation of the MNU in those plans is so appreciated.

The Winnipeg health region is especially pleased at the number of nurses willing to go to assist in northern communities that vitally need additional care. We are proud of this great response.

To the entire interprofessional team (every single health care worker has contributed to the WRHA response to H1N1 Influenza A) - thank you for your commitment to providing the highest level of service and patient care during the H1N1 Influenza A outbreak.

Jan Currie



Jan's role in Influenza H1N1 A: Coordinating and advising the response of our health care system to H1N1 Influenza A and acting as the media spokesperson to assist in public education and safety.

The Board and Senior Management says, sincerely, "Thank YOU for all your hard work, dedication and caring, Jan."

Open Letter to Nurses

Send your questions, comments and nursing stories to:

wrha_nursing@wrha.mb.ca

Submissions and comments are always appreciated - keep them coming!

Congratulations to all the nurses who won awards for excellence! Find out who these nurses are at:

<http://home.wrha.mb.ca/prog/nursing/index.php>

The 2009 Celebration Powerpoint Video presented at First Line Managers Day on June 2, 2009, is now available on Insite. The video highlights the accomplishments of nursing and allied health managers from across the Winnipeg health region.

To view the video, visit:

<http://home.wrha.mb.ca/prog/nursing/files/CelebrationVideo2009.ppt>



Access to the current issue and past issues of Open Letter to Nurses is available on INSITE. Submissions and comments are welcome.

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