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# NewsRelease

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Friday, September 19, 2008**

**Alberta doctors call on Alberta Health Services Board  
for action and communication about pandemic planning**

**EDMONTON** – Believing that creation of the Alberta Health Services Board (AHSB) provides a new opportunity, Alberta’s doctors are calling on the board to urgently address the issue of influenza pandemic preparedness and to communicate those plans widely. The Alberta Medical Association’s (AMA’s) 119-physician Representative Forum passed a resolution to this effect at a meeting in Edmonton today.

AMA President Dr. Darryl D. LaBuick explained that under the old system of nine regional health authorities (RHAs), doctors felt that every region seemed to be preparing in a different way and to different degrees. AMA surveys from 2006 to 2008 found only one-in-five physicians believed their RHAs were prepared. “Alberta Health Services Board needs not only to prepare – but also to communicate about its readiness to respond,” he said.

The Canadian Medical Association (CMA) has developed a checklist to help physicians prepare. Copies were distributed to delegates at the AMA meeting and Dr. LaBuick said the information will be widely shared with physicians in the near future. “We will be doing what we can to put our own practices in order,” he concluded. “But we can’t do this without clear leadership, coordinated, province-wide planning and regular communication from the Alberta Health Services Board about what is happening.”

Questions raised by physicians include:

- How will the Alberta Health Services Board coordinate activities locally and provincially?
- How will AHSB communicate with physicians in the community?
- What measures will be in place to protect physicians and all front-line health professionals?
- Is there a central stockpile of necessary infection control supplies for physician offices?

The AMA represents nearly 9,000 physicians, medical residents and medical students. With the vision of Patients First®, the AMA stands as an advocate organization to provide leadership and support for the physician’s role in the provision of quality health care.

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Media availability

There will be a pandemic preparedness exhibit featuring:

- Display-sized CMA checklist
- Various supplies physicians will need in their offices

Where: Sutton Place Hotel  
 10235 101 St NW  
 Edmonton AB  
 Alberta Medical Association exhibit hall, second floor  
 (Please check in with registration for name badge)

When: Friday, September 19, 2008

**For further information, please contact:**

Ronald A. Kustra, ABC  
 Assistant Executive Director (Public Affairs)  
 Alberta Medical Association  
 Cell: 780.990.4271

Shannon E. Rupnarain, MBA, ABC  
 Director (Public Affairs)  
 Alberta Medical Association  
 Cell: 780.907.9003

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**BACKGROUNDER**

**Pandemic facts**

**Pandemic:** an outbreak of an infectious disease, infecting humans and causing serious illness, that spreads easily across a large area or worldwide.

**Avian influenza** (“bird flu”): an infectious disease in birds that does not normally infect humans. Certain strains (particularly H5N1) have caused severe respiratory disease in humans who have been in close contact with infected poultry or with objects contaminated by their feces. There is concern that the virus could mutate to become more easily transmissible between humans.

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The risk of pandemic influenza is serious. With the H5N1 virus now firmly entrenched in large parts of Asia, the risk that more human cases will occur persists. Each additional human case gives the virus an opportunity to improve its transmissibility in humans, and thus develop into a pandemic strain. The recent spread of the virus to poultry and wild birds in new areas further broadens opportunities for human cases to occur. While neither the timing nor the severity of the next pandemic can be predicted, the probability that a pandemic will occur has increased. [(Source: World Health Organization ([www.who.int/eng](http://www.who.int/eng)))]

Alberta Health and Wellness has estimated the impact of a moderate pandemic would be:

- Four times as many outpatient visits than in a regular influenza year
- Four times as many hospitalizations
- Eight times as many deaths.