

May 8, 2009

To: All Alberta Physicians

Subject: Physician Issues in a Pandemic

The current spread of the H1N1 influenza virus has prompted questions on a number of physician issues related to how doctors will be supported and protected in the event of a pandemic.

As part of previous provincial pandemic planning, a working group of physicians representing the Medical Directors of the former health regions, CPSA, AMA and AHW considered several issues affecting physicians as a result of a public health disaster / pandemic.

Recommendations included:

- Funding and financial issues:
  - Support for physicians who are unable to conduct their normal medical / surgical practice or who are required to work in areas outside their normal responsibilities. This includes setting hourly pay rates when Fee For Service (FFS) is not practical.
  - A supplement to disability insurance for physicians who become ill as a result of working during a pandemic.
  - Support regarding CMPA dues for retired physicians returning to work during a pandemic.
- Emergency licensing of physicians recruited from outside of the province or those returning to practice.
- Roles for International Medical Graduates (IMGs), residents, medical students and retired physicians.
- Roles of community physicians, and support for them in relation to supplies (eg. masks, etc).
- Various modes of communication with all Alberta physicians.

Other issues considered included:

- Liability coverage for physicians working during a pandemic, especially outside of their normal practice in unfamiliar areas or situations where usual standards of practice cannot be maintained is being addressed by CMPA
- Guidance for healthcare workers who are faced with ethical issues, such as rationing of resources.

If and when a disaster or pandemic public health emergency is declared, full details of the work of the Physician Issues Working Group will be circulated to all physicians.

Dr. Douglas Perry  
Senior Provincial Clinical Advisor  
Alberta Health and Wellness

Dr. David Megran  
Senior Physician Executive  
Alberta Health Services