
DATE: June 5, 2013

REPORT TITLE: **REVIEW OF PEEL PUBLIC HEALTH INFLUENZA IMMUNIZATION CLINICS AND INCLUSION OF PHARMACISTS IN ONTARIO'S UNIVERSAL INFLUENZA IMMUNIZATION PROGRAM**

FROM: Janette Smith, Commissioner of Health Services
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RECOMMENDATION

That Peel Public Health continue to offer influenza immunization clinics in large malls within Mississauga and Brampton, and in one location in Caledon.

And further, that the Regional Chair write to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, on behalf of Regional Council, to advocate for an increase in the per dose funding of influenza immunization by Ontario public health units to match the funding to pharmacists who administer influenza immunization.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- The 2012-2013 expansion of Ontario's Universal Influenza Immunization Program permitted pharmacists to administer publicly-funded influenza vaccines to Ontarians five years of age and older. In Peel, 33 pharmacies were qualified to administer influenza vaccine.
- Of 342,568 doses of influenza vaccine distributed in Peel in 2012-2013, 7,858 doses (2.3 per cent) were administered through 32 community influenza immunization clinics run by Peel Public Health, a decline of twenty per cent from the previous season.
- It is anticipated that as more pharmacists offer influenza immunization, the uptake in Peel Public Health clinics will continue to decline.
- A 2012-2013 survey of influenza immunization clinic attendees showed that location was the main reason for attending a clinic. 90 per cent of respondents indicated they would have still sought immunization elsewhere if their preferred clinic location was not available.
- Pharmacists receive a higher per dose reimbursement from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care compared to public health units.

DISCUSSION

1. Background

In 2000, the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) introduced the Universal Influenza Immunization Program. All Ontarians six months of age and older

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became eligible to receive free influenza immunization. Since the inception of the Universal Influenza Immunization Program, influenza vaccine has been administered through physicians' offices, workplaces, hospitals, long-term care facilities and in Peel Public Health's community clinics. The Universal Influenza Immunization Program expanded in 2012-2013, allowing pharmacists to administer publicly-funded influenza vaccines to Ontarians five years of age and older.

Peel Public Health's role in the Universal Influenza Immunization Program is to:

- Promote annual influenza vaccination in Peel region;
- Conduct inspections of facilities storing publicly-funded vaccine to ensure that safe and effective vaccines are delivered to the public;
- Distribute vaccine to workplaces, hospitals, long-term care facilities, physicians' offices, and pharmacies;
- Provide information on vaccines and immunization practices to physicians and other providers;
- Offer influenza immunization clinics to the general public.

Seasonal influenza may infect 10-20 per cent of the population each year and is ranked as one of the top ten most burdensome infectious agents in Ontario causing premature death and reduced functioning. Influenza infection is most common in children, but rates of serious complications and death are highest in people 65 years of age and older, as well as those with underlying medical conditions. The National Advisory Committee on Immunization recommends that people at high risk of complications from influenza and those who are in contact with this group should be immunized annually. Since 2000, approximately 30-40 per cent of people in Peel region and Ontario receive influenza immunization each year.

Peel residents can access influenza vaccination at a variety of locations. Peel Public Health's community clinics provide influenza vaccine to the general public, including residents with no Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) coverage. Peel physicians provide the majority of influenza immunization to Peel residents and administer approximately 81 per cent of influenza immunizations in the region annually (Appendix I).

Peel Public Health administers a small proportion of influenza immunization (less than 3 per cent) in community clinics, with a declining trend in attendance over the past several years. With the expansion of the Universal Influenza Immunization Program to include a growing number of pharmacists who provide influenza immunization, it is anticipated that the attendance at Peel Public Health's community clinics will continue to decrease. This report reviews the role of Peel Public Health's influenza immunization clinics and provides recommendations to enhance the cost-effectiveness of the clinics.

2. Findings

a) Peel Public Health Influenza Immunization Clinics

i) Attendance Trends

Peel Public Health's influenza immunization clinics are held from October to January every year in various community locations such as municipal civic centres, community centres, schools and malls. The community clinics provide influenza

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vaccine to the general public, including residents with no Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) coverage or those who do not have a family physician.

In 2012-2013, a total of 32 community influenza immunization clinics were held in Peel region. Attendance was highest at large malls (Erin Mills Town Centre, Bramalea City Centre and Shopper's World). Combined attendance at these locations accounted for 53.6 per cent (4,213) of clinic visits overall. In contrast, clinics held at smaller locations had far fewer visitors. For example, almost one-third of the clinics held had less than 150 visitors attend.

Overall, 7,858 doses of influenza vaccine were administered in community influenza immunization clinics, a decline of 20 per cent from the previous season. A similar decline in attendance was observed in other health units in the Greater Toronto Area.

In addition, the overall distribution of influenza vaccine to all providers fell by 17,752 doses (5.5 per cent) compared to the previous season.

ii) Results of Influenza Immunization Clinic Survey

All visitors 18 years of age and older who attended a community influenza immunization clinic during the 2012-2013 influenza season were asked to participate in a survey to determine the characteristics of visitors who attend, and to understand the factors that may influence their decision to choose a community clinic.

A total of 4,525 visitors completed the survey, with a response rate of 71.3 per cent. The main findings of the survey included:

Visitor characteristics

- The median age of visitors was 55 years old;
- The majority of survey respondents came from Mississauga 46.8 per cent (2,165) followed by Brampton 38.2 per cent (1,691) and Caledon 7.6 per cent (337). Five per cent of clinic attendees lived outside of Peel region;
- The majority of respondents (89.1 per cent) spoke English;
- The majority of respondents self-identified as being "White" 58.6 per cent, followed by "Chinese" 7.5 per cent and "South Asian" 6.3 per cent.

Risk of influenza complications

- In total, 73.1 per cent of respondents were priority recipients of the influenza vaccine based on National Advisory Committee on Immunization guidelines;
- Of those, 46.9 per cent were at high risk of influenza complications or hospitalizations, largely due to having an underlying medical condition;
- A further 51.4 per cent of respondents were capable of transmitting influenza to those at high risk.

Access to influenza immunization

- Nearly all respondents had an OHIP card (98.2 per cent) and a family physician (94.8 per cent);

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- More than 90 per cent of respondents reported they would have still gotten their influenza immunization even if it was not offered at the clinic they attended;
- Location was the main reason for choosing to attend a community clinic.

iii) Costs of Community Influenza Immunization Clinics

The Region of Peel is reimbursed \$5.00 per dose of influenza vaccine administered from the MOHLTC. However, this level of funding has remained unchanged since 2000.

The total direct clinic cost in 2012-2013 was \$81,704 (excluding costs for base staff positions, promotion, training and meetings). The cost per dose varied significantly between clinics and was largely affected by attendance levels at each clinic. For example, the combined average cost per dose of influenza immunization at large mall clinics was \$8.90. Comparatively, at all other locations, the average cost was 27 per cent higher at \$12.13 per dose.

b) Participation of Pharmacists in the 2012-2013 Universal Influenza Immunization Program

i) Launch of the Universal Influenza Immunization Program in Pharmacies

Ontario pharmacists began providing influenza immunization on October 15, 2012. Ontarians five years of age and older were able to receive influenza immunization in pharmacies. Pharmacists are a convenient option for Peel residents to access influenza immunization as they are open on evenings and weekends.

In Peel region, 33 pharmacies qualified to participate in 2012-2013 influenza immunization program and comprised approximately 10 per cent of the 339 eligible pharmacies. These pharmacies were located throughout Peel with 16 located in Mississauga, 15 in Brampton, and one pharmacy in Bolton. One additional pharmacy was located in Orangeville. The small number of pharmacies participating in the first year of the influenza immunization program expansion is likely linked to the brief time period (two months) available to pharmacies to qualify for the influenza immunization program.

ii) Peel Public Health's Role

Peel Public Health supported pharmacists by conducting refrigerator inspections to ensure that pharmacists met the provincial requirement for the storage and handling of publicly-funded vaccine. Peel Public Health has recently submitted a funding request to the MOHLTC for \$15,644 reimbursement of costs related to the integration of pharmacies into the influenza immunization program. Peel Public Health distributed 11,360 doses of influenza vaccine to participating pharmacies in 2012-2013.

iii) Per Dose Funding of Influenza Vaccine for Pharmacists

Pharmacists are reimbursed by the MOHLTC at \$7.50 per dose of influenza vaccine administered. This amount is 50 per cent higher than the \$5.00 per dose reimbursement for public health units in Ontario (Appendix II). On October 12, 2012, the Association of Local Public Health Agencies of Ontario (alPHA) wrote to Health Minister Deb Matthews

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to advocate for an increase in funding for public health units to match the funding provided to pharmacists. This \$5.00 per dose reimbursement has not increased since 2000, while costs of the influenza immunization program have steadily increased over the past 13 years.

iv) Participation of Pharmacists in the 2013-2014 Universal Influenza Immunization Program

At the time of writing this report, the 2013-2014 one-time funding amount for Peel Public Health's vaccine fridge inspections of pharmacies was unknown. The MOHLTC has projected that a minimum of 61 of 342 Peel pharmacies will qualify for the influenza immunization program this year. Therefore short-term contract staff will be required to conduct inspections. Based on the 11,360 doses of influenza vaccine distributed to 33 pharmacies in the 2012-2013 season, it is expected that a significantly higher number of doses will be distributed to pharmacies in 2013-2014.

3. Proposed Direction

In the context of declining trends in clinic attendance and the new option to obtain influenza immunization in pharmacies, Peel Public Health has reviewed the influenza immunization clinics program and proposes the following:

a) Continue to Offer Peel Public Health's Influenza Immunization Clinics in Large Malls and One Location in Caledon

The three large mall locations (Erin Mills Town Centre, Bramalea City Centre and Shopper's World) provide a convenient location for Peel residents to access influenza immunization. The larger volumes of visitors (range 640-2,086) results in a more cost-effective delivery of immunization in malls compared to smaller community clinic locations. The cost of the larger clinics was higher than the reimbursement from the Province; however, the total amount of the difference was small.

Peel residents still have several options for getting influenza immunization in addition to the Peel Public Health community clinics including: physician offices, workplaces and pharmacies.

Peel Public Health is the only organization capable of providing reasonably accessible service to those without OHIP coverage. This might be offered in clinics based in our own premises, but it would be equally cost effective to continue the larger clinics, reaching other clients as well. Peel Public Health will monitor uptake in influenza immunization community clinics annually to optimize efficient use of staff resources.

b) Advocate to the MOHLTC for Funding Increases to Universal Influenza Immunization Program Reimbursement

Peel Public Health supports the expansion of the influenza immunization program to include pharmacies as another option for residents to access influenza immunization. Peel Public Health advocates that the MOHLTC should increase the per dose reimbursement for public health units for influenza immunization from \$5.00 to \$7.50 to match the funding for pharmacists.

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c) Work with Councillors to Promote Influenza Immunization in Pharmacies

Peel Public Health will work with Councillors to promote the availability of influenza immunization in pharmacies via their communications to Peel residents through newsletters or social media.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

If the recommendation to focus Peel Public Health clinics in large malls and one community clinic in Caledon is approved, an estimated \$23,000 in direct cost-savings would be realized and used to offset inflationary pressures.

In addition, approximately six weeks of staff time required to plan and organize the smaller clinics would be saved. The opportunity created by focusing our flu clinics in mall locations will be used to support key immunization initiatives, such as introducing the use of the IRIS immunization database into clinics.



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Approved for Submission:



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APPENDIX I

**Proportion of Influenza Vaccine Distribution by Type of Provider, 2012-2013 Influenza
Season, Peel Region**

Provider	Doses distributed	Percentage of doses distributed
Physicians	278,570	81.3%
Hospitals	8,210	2.4%
Long-Term Care/Retirement Homes	12,030	3.5%
Pharmacists	11,360	3.3%
Workplaces	4,830	1.4%
Health care agencies (e.g VON)	19,510	5.7%
Peel Public Health	7,858	2.3%
Corrections	200	0.06%
Total	342,568	100%

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APPENDIX II

**Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Funding for Influenza Vaccination for
Physicians, Pharmacists and Public Health Units, 2012-2013 Season**

Provider	Per-dose reimbursement for influenza vaccination
Physicians	\$9.60*
Pharmacists	\$7.50
Public Health Units	\$5.00**

*Reimbursement amount if influenza vaccination is sole reason for the visit. Rostered physician group practices also receive a preventive care bonus for immunizing a minimum percentage of patients in their practice.

** This level of funding for public health units has remained unchanged since 2000.

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APPENDIX III

Number of Pharmacies by Municipality and Ward in Peel Region, 2013

Mississauga Ward Number	Total
1	13
2	11
3	15
4	18
5	25
6	20
7	43
8	26
9	13
10	12
11	14
Total	210

Brampton Ward Number	Total
1	11
2	14
3	24
4	12
5	5
6	12
7	5
8	9
9	12
10	18
Total	122

Caledon Ward Number	Total
1	0
2	0
3	2
4	0
5	8
Total	10

Peel Region Total	342
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Sources: Ontario College of Pharmacists Data as at May 2013;
Ward Boundaries from Integrated Planning, Corporate Services, Region of Peel