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Dear Colleagues;

RE: Viruses Circulating in Edmonton and surrounding area

Norovirus:

Norovirus is currently circulating in our communities causing significantly more outbreaks in seniors facilities and daycares than last winter.

Respiratory viruses:

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) has been increasing through December and is becoming proportionately a more common cause of recognized respiratory illnesses.

Over the past several weeks, low levels of **influenza A and B** have been identified throughout Alberta. The control strategies for influenza are more complicated this season as it has been recognized that:

- Influenza A (H1N1) strains tested to date in Canada are sensitive to amantadine and zanamivir (Relenza™ an inhaled neuraminidase inhibitor) but resistant to oseltamivir (Tamiflu™).
- Influenza A (H3N2) strains tested to date are sensitive to oseltamivir (Tamiflu™) and zanamivir (Relenza™), and resistant to amantadine.
- Influenza B strains tested to date are sensitive to oseltamivir.

All the influenza A strains recognized in Alberta to date have been influenza A (H3N2). Therefore, at this time oseltamivir would be the antiviral of choice should you wish to treat one of your patients. We will update you when new information becomes available. A more complete discussion regarding treatment options is available at <http://www.capitalhealth.ca/EspeciallyFor/Physicians/default.htm> and a link to the Canadian *Flu Watch* site is included here <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/fluwatch>. *Flu Watch* provides weekly reports on circulating influenza strains in Canada.

In the event of an influenza A or B outbreak in a congregate living site such as a lodge or designated assisted living site you may be contacted by Public Health to get orders for antiviral chemoprophylaxis for your patients at the site. Continuing Care Centers would have obtained standing orders in the fall for your patients in those facilities to be used in the event of an influenza outbreak. Unimmunized health care workers, working in a facility experiencing an influenza outbreak, may present to you for a prescription for antiviral chemoprophylaxis as recommended by public health.

Thank you for your continued support and cooperation.

Sincerely,



Marcia M Johnson MD, MHSc, FRCPC
Deputy Medical Officer of Health