



**Ministry of Health
and Long-Term Care**

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**Ministère de la Santé
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October 16, 2009

Re: Ontario Perinatal Surveillance System (OPSS) Data Collection of H1N1 Information

To all Ontario hospital CEOs and Midwifery Practices:

We are writing to seek your assistance with a critical perinatal health issue and to ask that you share this information with all the key perinatal people in your organization.

As you are aware, public health officials expect the 2009 pH1N1 influenza pandemic to return in a second and third wave between October 2009 and June 2010. The impact of pH1N1 influenza in pregnancy is not yet well-understood; however, from what is known to-date, pregnant women seem to be at particular risk of more serious illness and potentially serious outcomes. The Flu Watch program has extremely limited information on pregnant women who become ill with pH1N1 influenza, including no information on pregnancy outcomes.

The Ontario Perinatal Surveillance System (OPSS) has been asked by the Public Health Agency of Canada to participate in a one-year initiative to collect three data variables related to pH1N1 influenza illness and acute viral respiratory illness during pregnancy. The Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) and OPSS are requesting your support to ensure full participation in this initiative so that the new pH1N1 data variables are captured for every hospital birth and home birth in the province.

Similar pH1N1 data collection processes are currently under development in three other jurisdictions in Canada. However, because OPSS is a real-time system and Ontario has the largest proportion of births in Canada, this is a unique opportunity for OPSS and Ontario ministries to provide very current, population-based data. It will help us to learn more about this important public health issue and to prepare our health system to respond to any challenges that may lie ahead for pregnant women, their fetuses and newborns.

The OPSS is currently working on making the necessary changes to accommodate new collection processes. We are also in the process of communicating directly with all hospitals and midwifery practices to discuss implementation to convey the importance of capturing the new information for every birth in Ontario. If you have any questions, please contact the OPSS office at the number below.

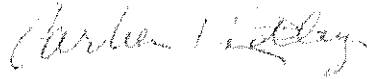
We must implement this process immediately (***data collection needs to start on November 1, 2009***). Normally, changes to the OPSS data collection system occur with more notice; however, due to the need for immediate public health preparation and the critical need for this data, it is essential that we move forward quickly to meet this deadline. We will be working with your organizations to make this process as smooth as possible.

We very much appreciate your cooperation.

Yours truly,



Arlene King, MD, MHSc, FRCPC
Chief Medical Officer of Health



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