

**Date:** November 17, 2009

**To:** ZEOC Directors and Executive Directors and Directors of Public Health

**From:** AHS – ECC in collaboration with AHS Cancer Care (Dr. Charlie Butts, Dr. Neil Hagen)

**Re:** Provision of pH1N1 for *all* adults and children *currently or recently undergoing treatment*

**Issue: Albertans currently undergoing cancer therapy may require pH1N1 vaccine and seasonal vaccine administered in a specific window period.**

There are about 5,000 Albertans actively receiving cancer therapy in the province. Immunization for adult and pediatric patients undergoing chemotherapy will be provided according to the guidelines below and in consultation with the physician to determine fitness to receive immunization.

- Annual administration of inactivated seasonal influenza vaccine and inactivated adjuvanted 2009 novel H1N1 monovalent vaccine are strongly recommended for all oncology patients, as well as for family members, caregivers and hospital/clinic staff in contact with patients.
- At this time, the highest priority groups within oncology are:
  - patients **of any age** who are currently receiving **cancer treatment** (they need to talk with local cancer treatment centre for information re vaccination and where to get it)
  - patients of any age who have received cancer treatment in the last year (they will be vaccinated at the public immunization clinics)
  - cancer healthcare providers (they are being vaccinated through AHS Staff Clinics)
- The next highest oncology priority group are cancer patients who have not been treated or who were last treated more than a year ago (they will be vaccinated at the public immunization clinics).
- Caregivers, then family members and household contacts, of persons with cancer will be added when further vaccine supply is available.
- In general **ideal timing** of vaccination for patients on active cancer treatment is at least 10-14 days before the start of any potentially immune suppressing cancer treatment such as radiation or chemotherapy. Where not possible, vaccination *between* chemotherapy cycles is preferable to not vaccinating at all. A low platelet count is not an absolute contraindication to vaccination..
- **Vaccination may occur at other times based on individual clinical judgment incorporating the patient's overall clinical situation.**
- **A CBC and platelet count are not needed prior to vaccination.**

Public Health staff in the AHS Zones will work with staff of the AHS Cancer Care Centres and Associated Cancer Centres to provide pH1N1 immunization in a timely manner and ensure that:

- The cold chain of the vaccine is maintained,
- Vials will be reconstituted when all doses can reasonably be administered within 24 hours of reconstitution,
- Patients will be assessed as fit to immunize
- Vaccine will be administered by an immunizer knowledgeable about the vaccine, contraindications, and potential adverse events,
- Adverse reactions to pH1N1 immunization will be reported to Health Link Alberta, and
- All vaccine will be accounted for as doses administered, doses available, and doses wasted.