



Protect patients and clients from virus by protecting yourself, HSA tells members

September 24, 2009

The Health Sciences Association of BC (HSA) today released a report by an environmental health expert that recommends a high standard of personal protective equipment use by health care workers to minimize the spread of the deadly H1N1 virus.

HSA and its national union, the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE), commissioned the study by John Murphy of Resource Environmental Associates, Ltd., a firm that specializes in occupational and environmental health and safety. The report was commissioned after it became clear that there was no universal standard across the province on how best to prevent the spread of the virus in hospital and other health care settings.

-It became apparent this summer that there was no consistent protocol across the province, let alone across the country, about the level of personal protective measures health care workers need to take to minimize the risk of spreading or contracting the virus," HSA President Reid Johnson said.

-This report analyses the science and comes to the conclusion that health care workers have a right and responsibility to make an assessment of the risk of spreading the infection, and to take appropriate infection control measures to protect themselves and their patients," Johnson said.

This standard was supported late last week in a policy directive issued by BC's Chief Medical Health Officer Perry Kendall. Kendall has directed health authorities that health care workers who conduct a point of care risk assessment and conclude that personal protective equipment is required have a right to choose the level of protective equipment they use, including N95 masks to prevent aerosol contamination, in addition to gowns and gloves and other protective measures.

HSAs occupational health and safety stewards from around the province are in Richmond today for guidance on how to help members make an informed point of care risk assessment.

HSA is the union that represents more than 15,000 health science professionals who work in health care and community social services providing clinical, diagnostic and rehabilitation services in hospitals and in the community. HSA members include the respiratory therapists and physiotherapists who are on the front line of treating patients with severe respiratory challenges arising from influenza. HSA members also work closely with vulnerable populations, including children, in the community.

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For pdf of full Murphy report - Respiratory Protection During Care of Influenza Patients, contact msobrino@hsabc.org

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180 East Columbia
New Westminster, BC V3L 0G7

Website
www.hsabc.org

Telephone 604-517-0994
1-800-663-2017