



955316

November 30, 2012

Dear Health Authority Chief Executive Officers:

As you are aware, the *Health Care Worker Influenza Control Policy* (the Policy) comes into effect on December 1, 2012. I am writing to provide an overview and clarification on the implementation and enforcement provisions of the Policy.

The Policy is designed to protect vulnerable patients and seniors from contracting influenza from their caregivers. As a result, all health care workers who come into contact with patients at publicly funded health care facilities, or in the community, including long-term care facilities, need either to be immunized against influenza, or to wear a mask.

In the first year of implementing the Policy, we will focus on educational efforts and onsite influenza clinics to promote compliance. However, over the coming few months, the Ministry of Health (the Ministry) will be engaging in additional consultation with both impacted unions and impacted excluded groups to best determine a comprehensive approach to full-scale implementation of the Policy. Therefore, in the first year, the enforcement components of the Policy will be in abeyance, and non-compliant staff are not to be disciplined.

I recognize that protecting vulnerable patients in British Columbia is, and will continue to be, a shared responsibility between employers and staff. I would like to afford health care workers the additional opportunity to voice their opinions on how best to achieve our shared objective.

I will also commit to sending you regular updates as our talks progress. The weekly conference calls on this issue will also continue.

While taking a measured approach to the implementation of the Policy during the first year, I want to be clear that operative standards of existing policies regarding influenza outbreaks remain in effect.

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We have a common vision for patient care, and we share a common desire for patient safety. It is my hope that, through the forthcoming dialogue, we can establish a shared vehicle for moving the Policy forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'GWH', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Graham Whitmarsh
Deputy Minister

pc: Ms. Sandra Carroll, Chief Operating Officer
Dr. Perry Kendall, Provincial Health Officer
Ms. Nichola Manning, Assistant Deputy Minister, Medical Services and
Health Human Resources Division