



Toronto Teaching Hospitals Release Pandemic Influenza Planning Guidelines
Document outlines planning principles and actions for Toronto teaching hospitals

May 31, 2006, TORONTO, ON....Today, the Toronto Academic Health Sciences Network (TAHSN), made up of nine Toronto teaching hospitals affiliated with the University of Toronto, released its Pandemic Influenza Planning Guidelines. The document provides recommended guiding principles and actions TAHSN hospitals to consider in response to an influenza pandemic, and serves as a guide for other hospitals.

“We know that a global influenza pandemic is not an ‘if’ but a ‘when,” says Dr. Michael Gardam, Co-Chair of the TAHSN Pandemic Task Force and Director of Infection Prevention and Control, University Health Network. “We also know that during a pandemic, hospitals will become overwhelmed caring for additional patients in the face of limited resources. As hospitals, we have a duty to prepare to protect our staff and patients to keep the health care system running.”

In May 2005, TAHSN brought its members together to develop coordinated pandemic preparedness guidelines for the nine hospitals. Toronto Public Health, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and two community hospitals – St. Joseph’s Health Centre and Toronto East General Hospital – joined as observers to share their unique perspectives and ensure linkages.

“Pandemic influenza plans were developed at national, provincial and local levels of government, but what’s needed is an approach for hospitals,” says John King, Co-Chair and Executive Vice President, St. Michael’s Hospital. “TAHSN members have pooled their collective expertise and experience to tackle complex issues that will ultimately face hospitals during an influenza pandemic. We believe that our planning document will be a resource to other hospitals as they develop their plans.”

The guidelines consist of 12 chapters: an action plan; an ethical framework; communication/education; capacity assessment, triage and patient management; anti-viral medication and vaccine; supplies; safety and support; human resources; physicians and surgeons; patient registry/information technology; and recovery.

Key recommendations include:

- Stockpiling anti-virals to protect all hospital staff from getting sick in the first place so that hospitals can keep running;
- Canceling or scaling-back some programs and services (eg. elective surgeries) to create additional capacity in hospitals;
- Redeployment of staff to other roles in the hospital to maintain adequate staffing levels;
- Educating staff about the pandemic and the organization’s response;
- Using an ethical framework to guide decision-making.

“These guidelines will evolve as new information emerges,” said Jeff Lozon, Chair of TAHSN and President and CEO, St. Michael’s Hospital. “We also hope that we will never have to implement our plans. But, it’s easier to think through these complex issues and coordinate our approach now than during a pandemic.”

To get a copy of the TAHSN Pandemic Influenza Planning Guidelines please go to:
www.tahsn.ca

The Toronto Academic Health Sciences Network (TAHSN) is a network of academic health organizations, affiliated with the University of Toronto, providing leading-edge research, teaching and clinical care. Members consist of: Baycrest Geriatric Health Care System; Bloorview Kids Rehab; Centre for Addiction and Mental Health; Mount Sinai Hospital; St. Michael’s Hospital; Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre; The Hospital for Sick Children; Toronto Rehabilitation Institute; and University Health Network. Each of these institutions has national/international standing in their particular fields.

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