

SARS Bulletin for Healthcare Providers

Ministry of Health &
Long Term Care

*A newsletter for
Healthcare Providers*

Issue no. 1, April 24, 2003

The government of Ontario is committed to providing the information healthcare providers require in order to deliver the services needed to manage SARS. As part of these ongoing communications, the government will be issuing a SARS bulletin on a regular basis to inform healthcare professionals of new directives and other pertinent information. **This bulletin is intended only to provide an overview of issued directives and communications and does not replace or amend these documents.**

SARS WEBSITE

The government continues to disseminate information on its public website, including information for healthcare providers. Users are directed to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care website, www.health.gov.on.ca. Information for the public is also available online at www.healthyonario.com.

KEY INFORMATION FOR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

- Staff working in acute care facilities should read the infection control directive issued to acute care hospitals on April 24th, which details air supply requirements, SARS patient room arrangements, personal protective equipment for staff and patient care activities.
- Healthcare workers considering attending a staff gathering or other professional function outside of their workplace are advised that SARS risk is low, adequate infection control procedures are being taken and therefore Toronto is considered a safe city to travel to and congregate in. The ultimate decision to hold an event rests with the organizing body. Healthcare professionals concerned

KEY SARS FACTS

- Nearly half of all SARS cases to date have been discharged.
- As of today's date, there are 89 cases currently in hospital, at home or under investigation, down by 29 from last week.
- A Centers for Disease Control (CDC) spokesperson in Toronto commented in response to the recent World Health Organization (WHO) travel advisory that "the Canadian public health response has been exemplary" and that "the Canadian situation differs in nature from the community cases that have occurred elsewhere in the world."
- Dr. D'Cunha continues to advise the public to remain at home if they are sick and follow isolation protocols if required.

about interacting with their hospital-based colleagues should note that infection control protocols are being followed and personal protective equipment worn by all staff.

- Any staff who have had unprotected exposure to SARS are quarantined.

DIRECTIVES

Acute Care Hospital Update

- New directives were issued this week on April 24th, providing guidance on infection control measures. A directive was also issued on April 18th addressing clinical placements for students.
- Please consult your facility administration and organization/college to obtain copies of directives or visit the website at www.health.gov.on.ca/login/sarsrep.
- York Central Hospital is now classified as a Level 1 hospital and is gradually resuming services.
- Scarborough Grace Hospital has completed its external infection control audit and is planning for the resumption of services.

Non-Acute Care Update

Making healthcare work for you.



- A new omnibus directive was issued on April 18th, replacing previous directives issued on April 5th and March 29th.
- Please consult your facility administration and organization/college to obtain copies of directives or visit the website at www.health.gov.on.ca/login/sarsrep.

NEWS

- This week the government announced \$2.5 million in funding for research and testing and committed to deal with surgery backlogs due to the SARS emergency.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) has issued a travel advisory warning against travelling to Toronto for non-essential purposes. Dr. Don Low, chief of microbiology at Mount Sinai, commented that the advisory is “inappropriate” and not founded on facts. Toronto Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Sheila Basrur, stated “in my opinion, the facts of the matter do not warrant [the advisory], at this time.”

COMMUNICATIONS

- Public information advertising continues in all major daily newspapers.

CURRENT CASE STATUS

(as of April 24, 2003)

Total current cases	89
Probable	136
Suspect	121
Cumulative total	257
Discharged	132
Deaths	16

- Press conferences with the Commissioner of Public Health, the Commissioner of Public Security and other medical experts continue to be held throughout the week at 3pm or as needed.
- A fact sheet was released and posted on the public Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

website on April 16th, detailing measures to be taken for faith-based practices.

CONTACT INFO.

- Websites www.health.gov.on.ca, www.healthyontario.com
- Medical information hotline 1-866-212-2272