

SARS Bulletin for Healthcare Providers

Ministry of Health &
Long-Term Care

*A newsletter for
Healthcare Providers*

Issue no. 4, April 29, 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 provides an update on new directives and communications and does not replace or amend these documents.

KEY INFORMATION FOR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

Premier Eves today announced a SARS action plan that includes targeted special funding for SARS-specific healthcare costs:

- The province will assist municipalities to cover SARS-related staffing and other costs, such as emergency medical services.
- The first piece of legislation to be introduced when the Legislature returns this week will be legislation to protect the jobs of quarantined workers; and strengthen current powers to curb the spread of SARS and other infectious diseases.
- A priority is to reinforce the public health care system to continue the battle against SARS.
- The government will immediately expand staffing in public health surveillance, epidemiology and laboratory areas.
- Six mobile rapid-response teams will be created to deal with outbreaks of SARS or other infectious diseases wherever they happen.
- The government will look to the Ontario Innovation Trust and the R & D Challenge Fund, and work with partners in the academic and medical communities, along with the federal government, to ensure a coordinated network to deal with infectious diseases.
- A registry of nursing and other health care staff available to help out in facilities under stress from SARS will be established immediately

Health Canada, through its Special Access Programme, will no longer provide routine access to ribavirin for the treatment of SARS. Health Canada states "there is no data to support the continued use of ribavirin outside of clinical trials at this time." On April 27, Health Canada notified physicians that the continued access to the drug is contingent upon the submission and review of data in the possession of physicians with respect to the use, safety and efficacy of ribavirin for the treatment of SARS. Health Canada strongly advises physicians currently treating patients with ribavirin to "critically re-examine the risk/benefit for each patient before continuing treatment."

KEY SARS FACTS

- The World Health Organization (WHO) announced today that it will lift its travel advisory for Toronto, following meetings with the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and the Chief Medical Officer of Health. This is effective April 30th.
- Premier Eves announced additional healthcare funding for health emergencies.
- No known transmission from the following potential SARS sites:
 - Highland Funeral Home
 - Metro Hall
 - GO train to/from Appleby/Union
- 69 hospital cases – 39 probable and 30 suspect.

DIRECTIVES

- Questions and answers relating to **employees** becoming ill in the workplace and to **long-term care facilities** were posted on April 25th.
- No new directives were issued.
- Please consult your facility administration and organization/college to obtain copies of all directives issued to date.

CURRENT CASE STATUS

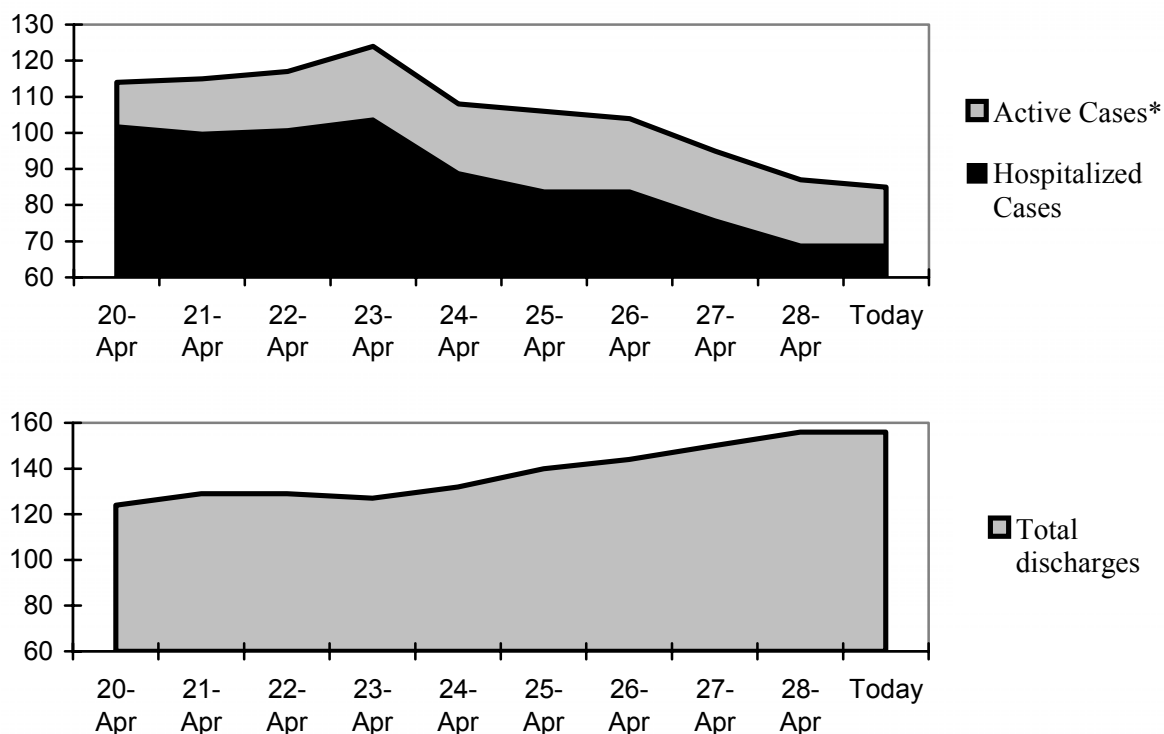
(As of April 29, 2003)

Probable	144
Suspect	118
Cumulative total	262
Total current cases*	69
Healthcare workers†	75
Discharged	156
Deaths	21

* = in hospital

† = probable & suspect

EPIDEMIOLOGY



* Active Cases includes probable and suspect cases in hospital, at home or under investigation.

COMMUNICATIONS

- Advertisements thanking healthcare professionals continue to run in 43 regional daily newspapers during this week.
- Press conferences with the Commissioner of Public Health, the Commissioner of Public Security and other medical experts continue to be held daily throughout the week at 3 p.m. or as needed.

CONTACT INFORMATION

- Websites www.health.gov.on.ca, www.healthyontario.com
- Medical information hotline 1-866-212-2272
- 'Hot spots' reporting line 1-866-670-3155 or locally 416-212-0890 (recorded message of potential transmission sites).

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