

Ontario Agency for Health
Protection and Promotion

START UP

July 2009

Welcome to Start Up, a newsletter to update you on new developments as we build Ontario's first public health agency.

For additional background information, we invite you to visit our website at www.oahpp.ca.



Message from Vivek Goel, President and Chief Executive Officer



It was in the midst of the official opening of the [Sheela Basrur Centre](#) – the site of the new Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (OAHPP) offices in Toronto – that news broke about a potentially serious virus emerging in Mexico.

As the former Chief Medical Officer of Health for Ontario, Dr. Sheela Basrur was at the centre of the 2003 SARS outbreak and was instrumental in establishing OAHPP as a hub for infectious disease surveillance and management in Ontario.

The H1N1 flu virus outbreak marks our agency's first real journey along the incredibly important path that Sheela set out for us. It has tested our capacity as an organization, the ties that bind our public health partners, and our collective ability to provide timely and accurate information, knowledge and support to enable better decisions and actions for the health of Ontario.

What we saw was a rapid response from all of Canada's public health stakeholders – one that reflected the great strides made post-SARS by Sheela and others like her to improve public health in Ontario, and across the country.

I am proud of OAHPP's contribution to this effort. During the outbreak our public health laboratories worked around the clock to quickly diagnose new cases, increasing our capacity for flu testing to more than 300 samples per day. We worked with the media to provide accurate medical and scientific information to the public. Perhaps most importantly, we helped to inform our fellow public health professionals and front-line workers about important developments in the management and surveillance of the disease.



Now, our epidemiologists are collecting and analyzing data from Ontario and around the world in an ongoing effort to understand more about the virus. Our researchers are preparing proposals that will help to address this and future outbreaks of influenza. And we continue to work with our partners in government and public health to evaluate our response and learn from our experience. All of this will help us to make more informed decisions moving forward.

We know that there will always be new diseases, but we don't always know when and where they'll make their appearance, or how they'll affect our population. Most epidemiologists predicted that the next pandemic disease would be an avian flu virus out of Southeast Asia. The H1N1 flu virus serves to remind us of the essential role of our organization, and of the importance of maintaining our peripheral vision as well as our intense focus. We must be vigilant to all possibilities, and more importantly we must be prepared.

I'd like to thank our partners in government and public health for their incredible support during this challenging time. While there will always be work ahead of us, I feel confident that we are on the right track. This outbreak has shown that we can thrive as a public health community under the toughest of circumstances, and emerge with a greater understanding and readiness for the road ahead.

In other news...

In the midst of the outbreak, our staff have worked hard to fulfil the mandate of the entire agency, and to continue to build our organization. Here are a few of our highlights:

- [Sheela Basrur Centre opens its doors](#)
- [Update on strategic planning](#)
- [Meet our new Health Promotion, Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention Team!](#)
- [Board appointments](#)
- [Leadership appointments](#)
- [Other appointments](#)

~ Vivek Goel



Start Up is produced by the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion to update you on start-up and laboratory planning activities. OAHPP welcomes your comments, questions and suggestions at info@oahpp.ca.

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