

BCNA BULLETIN

QUARTERLY NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE BC NATUROPATHIC ASSOCIATION

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PANDEMIC H1N1 & B.C.'s NDs PROFILE PREVENTIVE MEASURES, PUBLIC POLICY, PROS AND CONS OF VACCINATION, CAM & INFLUENZA

Clinical & Practical Perspectives by Dr. Caleb Ng

By now, news regarding H1N1 influenza A is breaking almost daily. With all the media attention on this emergent pandemic influenza strain we must keep in mind that although the H1N1 virus has a morbidity rate double that of the regular seasonal flu, the mortality rate has been estimated to be lower. Bearing in mind that influenza A viruses inherently have a high rate of mutation, if the patterns of H1N1 transmission in South America and Australia is any indication of what we are to expect, the virus appears to be stable.

Background

Because the 2009 H1N1 virus comes antigenically from the influenza virus that caused the epidemic of 1918, the Spanish influenza model is being used as a template for government preparedness in this year's flu season. In addition to similar symptoms, H1N1 has exhibited a significant virulence in young adults as well as the usual senior and pediatric demographics. Fortunately, H1N1 lacks the gene responsible for a higher replication rate which explains a significantly lower mortality rate. Interestingly, there seems to be an acquired immunity in individuals born before the influenza pandemic of 1957-1958. Statistics gathered so far have shown a 50 per cent reduction in H1N1 incidence in this age group. Regardless of whether the flu will spread as widely as then, or evolve into a national state

of emergency, remains to be seen. Nevertheless, as primary care providers you have basic responsibilities to your patients in preparing for the flu season.

Symptoms

H1N1 is thought to have an incubation period of one to four days with signs and symptoms that last one to two weeks and may include:

- Rhinorrhea/Nasal congestion
- Febrile Respiratory Illness (greater than 100°F/37.8°C)
- Malaise
- Headache
- Cough

- Sore throat
- Myalgias/Arthralgias
- Gastrointestinal manifestations such as nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea have also been commonly found which are uncharacteristic of the seasonal flu
- Infants and toddlers may show with only fever and lethargy
- Symptoms of severe disease in infants and

The [provincial health] ministers also emphasized the importance of health promotion and chronic disease prevention and management in improving the health of all Canadians, especially during the [H1N1] pandemic. Ministers agreed the prevention of disease and disability plays a critical role in improving the health of the population while reducing costs to the health care system, and committed to making healthy living a priority.

From a September 17, 2009 federal press release

young children may include apnea, tachypnea, dyspnea, cyanosis, dehydration, altered mental status, and extreme irritability.

Most research estimates to date state that an individual remains contagious for seven days from initial onset of symptoms (especially with coughing and sneezing), although individuals have been found to be contagious for up to 16

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