

Registrant Pandemic Planning Kit

Practice Tools

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Introduction

Dealing with a flu pandemic will present a challenge like no other. Although there is no way to predict when a pandemic will occur, many experts believe that it is overdue and planning must take place to deal with such an emergency.

The World Health Organization, the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care have all released influenza pandemic documents to aid in the planning process and to address prevention, preparedness and operational activities for an effective response and recovery. An enormous amount of information and facts sheets are available. Given the challenge for individuals to gather and synthesize this volume of information, the College has compiled these resources and cross referenced them with frequently asked questions to assist you as you prepare both personally and professionally.

How to Use This Kit

This kit is intended to put together resources for registrants that will help answer general questions related to pandemic planning. The intent is to introduce the steps involved and concepts to be considered when developing a professional practice emergency plan and to assist individuals to begin to prepare their own plans in the event of a flu pandemic.

General Information

What is a Pandemic?

A pandemic is the worldwide outbreak of a specific disease to which people have little or no immunity.

An influenza pandemic occurs when an influenza virus changes and becomes a new strain against which people have little or no immunity AND this new strain is easily spread from person to person. Influenza pandemics have occurred about three times per century.

Some General Resources Include:

- [The World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) – the directing and coordinating authority for health within the United Nations system. Responsible for coordinating a global response to an influenza pandemic.
- [Public Health Agency of Canada \(PHAC\)](#) – communicates with key international organizations about outbreak activity world-wide. Responsible for coordinating a nation-wide response.
 - [Canadian Pandemic Influenza Plan](#)
- [Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care \(MOHLTC\)](#) – responsible for ensuring comprehensive provincial response to a pandemic in Ontario including: communicating information provincially to health care workers in partnership with various organizations such as the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario. [Pandemic Planning through the MOHLTC.](#)

- [MOHLTC Emergency Management Unit](#) – plans, organizes, manages and coordinates provincial responses to emergencies that affect and impact health, including a flu pandemic.
- [The MOHLTC Pandemic Planner Newsletter](#)
- [Local Public Health Units](#) - there are 36 local health units in Ontario responsible for coordinating the local response to an influenza pandemic. Local plans include the coordination of assessment and triage centres, commonly known as flu centres.
- [Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion](#) - an arms-length public health agency, dedicated to protecting and promoting the health of all Ontarians through application and advancement of science and knowledge.

College Position

The expectations of the College are outlined in a position statement entitled; [“Pandemic Influenza, Key Considerations for Physiotherapists.”](#) This document is also available in the [Registrants’ Guide](#) section of the College website.

These expectations can be summarized into the following five steps:

1. Get informed
 - Using this kit is the first step!
2. Have a plan (personal and professional)
 - [Make a Plan](#)
 - [Personal Emergency Kit Check List](#)
 - [Hand Washing Information](#)
3. Stay informed
 - See the section in this document titled “Staying Up-to-Date” under “Roles of Organizations”.
4. Inform your patients
 - Resources can be found in “General Facts” section of this document
5. Comply with your local Public Health Unit and the Provincial Emergency Management Unit directives and standards for practice
 - See the section of this document titled “How can I help?” for more information

General Obligations

During a Pandemic outbreak the Regulated Health Professions Act and the Physiotherapy Act will continue to be in place. Physiotherapists will be expected to make decisions based on the code of ethics and within their own personal ethical framework.

The obligations of health care professionals have been considered in such articles as [“On Pandemics and Duty to Care: whose duty? Who cares?”](#) in BMC Medical Ethics (April 2006) and [“Stand on Guard for Thee: Ethical Considerations in Preparedness Planning for Pandemic Influenza”](#) from the University of Toronto Joint Centre for Bioethics (November 2005). It is recognized that the answers to dilemmas

relating to care are often situational, and that the knowledge, skills and judgment of the individual will vary with profession and practice setting. As well, in an emergency, there may be a need for health care professionals to be reallocated from their usual roles and settings.

During an influenza pandemic, governments and public health authorities will have to make difficult decisions (e.g. access to vaccines and anti-virals, reallocation of people and resources etc.). These groups acknowledge that members of the public, health care workers and organizations are more likely to accept the difficult decisions that must be made if the decision-making processes are open and transparent, reasonable, inclusive, responsive and accountable. For more details on the ethical framework for decision making visit the [Ontario Health Plan for an Influenza Pandemic](#).

Roles of Organizations

The Role of the College

When the Emergency Management Unit of the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care declares a Pandemic outbreak and the province is put on Amber Alert, the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario will implement the College's business continuity plan. College operations will move to a virtual format. Staff will be available to provide support via telephone, email and teleconference contact and through the College website, in order to continue the operation of essential regulatory tasks (i.e. registration).

The College telephone message will provide information on College operations as well as contact information for the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care INFO Line.

The role of the College during a pandemic is four-fold.

The College will:

1. Ensure effective communication with registrants;
2. Provide advice on regulatory issues and standards of practice to registrants;
3. Maintain a mechanism to register qualified physiotherapists; and
4. Conduct other business as required to address regulatory matters.

In order to achieve these four goals, the College plans to:

- Maintain the Entry to Practice or Registration Program;
- Maintain the Practice Advisory Service;
- Suspend Patient Relations, Quality Management and Professional Conduct activities; and
- Maintain Council decision-making either as a whole or through the Executive Committee.

The Role of the Ministry of Health

The Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MOHLTC) is responsible for planning and managing the response to an influenza pandemic in Ontario, including activities such as:

- implementing national recommendations;
- conducting surveillance activities;
- coordinating investigations of outbreaks;
- confirming pandemic activity in Ontario; and
- providing guidelines and direction to local public health authorities and the health care system to ensure a consistent response across the province.

The MOHLTC has developed the [Ontario Health Plan for an Influenza Pandemic](#) which describes in more details the province's role and sets out expectations for local health authorities.

Health Care Provider Hotline 1-866-212-2272

The Role of the Employer

It is essential that businesses and organizations make reasonable efforts to protect the health of their employees, safeguard critical operations and plan for a pandemic. To assist organizations to prepare for and manage the impact of an influenza pandemic, the MOHLTC has published a [“Guide to Developing a Workplace Health Plan for an Influenza Pandemic”](#).

The guide follows a four-pronged strategy:

1. Communication: Opening lines of communication with employees, clients and external suppliers;
2. Containment: Containing the disease to the extent possible by reducing the spread at an organization's location(s);
3. Continuity: maintenance and continuity of critical services; and
4. Personal Preparedness: Preparing individuals for a pandemic.

For individuals working as employees, it is important to be informed of your employer's pandemic plan and your role within that plan.

Physiotherapists who employ others need to consider the impact of a flu pandemic on the workplace setting and the employees and develop a plan on how this situation will be managed.

Employer Resources

Additional resources for employers can be found on the [MOHLTC website](#) or by calling the Employer Hotline at 1-866-331-0339. These resources may also be helpful for employees who are required to follow their employer's plan.

Links to some of these resources are provided below.

- [Pandemic Planning Checklist for Employers](#)
- [Entry Point Notice](#) (available in multiple languages)
- [Infection Control Poster](#)
- [Hand washing](#)

Staying Up-to-Date

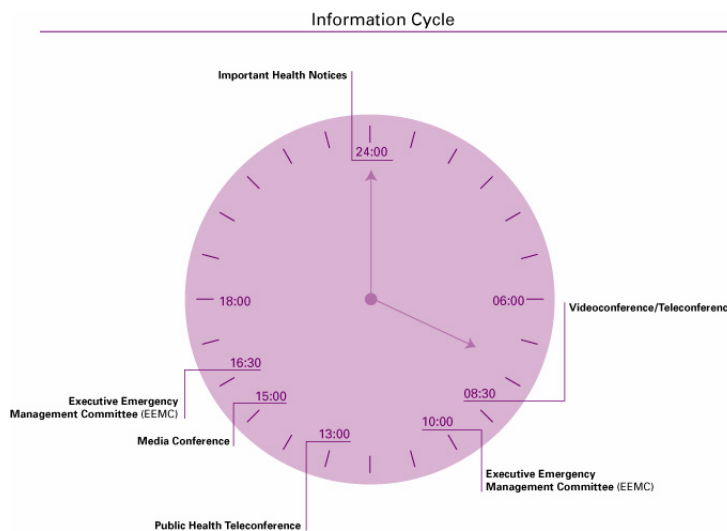
In the event that the MOHLTC declares that a pandemic situation exists in Ontario, the most up-to-date information will be available directly from the [MOHLTC website](#) or by calling the Health Care Provider Hotline at 1-866-212-2272.

Free advice and information will also be available via Tele Health Ontario at 1-866-797-0000.

A Daily Information Cycle (see figure below) has been developed by the MOHLTC to ensure that health regulatory colleges receive regular timely reports and that information is disseminated and briefings are conducted at pre-determined times each day. The College will receive information briefings from the Ministry and then disseminate relevant data to registrants in a variety of ways (e.g. via email, website postings, telephone recordings etc).

Contact the College at 416-591-3828 or toll free at 1-800-583-5885 or visit the [website](#).

MOHTC Daily Information Cycle



Reference:

[Ontario Health Plan, Chapter 12, Communications](#)

How Do I Prepare?

It is important to take the time to educate yourself on this topic by knowing the facts, in order to prepare. Developing good infection control practices in your day to day activities will help to reduce the spread of infectious diseases. Proper hand washing as well as practicing coughing and sneezing etiquette that encourages sneezing into your sleeve are current evidence based best practices shown to be the most effective ways to reduce the spread of infections. Proactive steps you can take now to help prepare yourself and your family, include making a plan and preparing a kit of resources available in the event a pandemic outbreak is declared.

The following resources are available to help you prepare;

Prevention Resources

Hand washing has been shown to be the most effective way to reduce the spread of infections.

- [5 moments for hand hygiene](#)
- [Protect your family from the flu](#)
- [Tips to prevent flu](#)

Checklists to Help You Prepare:

- [Make a Plan](#)
- [Personal Emergency Kit Check list](#)

General FAQs

The [Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care website](#) provides general information regarding influenza pandemic in the form of frequently asked questions. The focus of these FAQs is to inform the general public. Physiotherapists may find these resources helpful when preparing their individual and family plans as well as helpful resources to inform patients seeking information on the topic of influenza pandemic.

The following is a list of some of the FAQs available

- What is an influenza pandemic?
- How does an influenza pandemic start?
- What is the contagious period?
- What is the difference between ordinary/seasonal influenza (flu) and an influenza pandemic?
- Will Ontario be affected?
- What will happen if an influenza pandemic hits Ontario?
- Who is most at risk?
- How many people will fall ill? What kind of care will they need?
- What could a flu pandemic look like?

- When will there be a treatment for an influenza pandemic?
- When will there be a vaccine for an influenza pandemic?
- How can I protect myself and my family from an influenza pandemic?
- What is the health system doing to protect us from an influenza pandemic?

(Fact Sheets are also available in 24 languages, as resources for patients.)

Fact Sheets for Health Care Providers

The following fact sheets are available from the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care website to aid in Health Care Providers in pandemic influenza preparedness planning.

List of some of the fact sheets available from the [Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care website](#):

- How will anti-virals be used in an influenza pandemic?
- During an influenza pandemic there will be information from many sources – who should I believe?
- How can I bring forward my ideas and questions about planning for an influenza pandemic?
- Who is in charge during an influenza pandemic?
- How will I be kept informed during an influenza pandemic?
- How is Ontario preparing to respond to an influenza pandemic?
- I work alone – how will I know what to do during an influenza pandemic?

Pandemic Planner

The Ministry of Health and Long Term Care posts a monthly Pandemic Planner news letter on their web site. This is a helpful resource intended for health care professionals to keep current with the government direction, planning activities and new developments.

[Click here](#) for the monthly Pandemic Planner.

How Can I Help?

During an infectious disease outbreak, such as an Influenza Pandemic, demands for care may result in health providers having to weigh the provision of such care against competing obligations to their own health and that of family members. Physiotherapists should consider their personal competencies relevant to the provision of care during an influenza pandemic and develop a plan for decision-making and involvement.

Individual circumstances will vary depending on practice setting and nature of professional practice. There are no right or wrong answers; self assessment tools provide an opportunity to understand the skills and competencies that may be needed during an influenza pandemic and enable self assessment of how best to be of assistance.

Self Assessment Tools

The Ontario Health Plan for an Influenza Pandemic (OHPIP) provides resources to help individuals complete a self assessment of their own competencies for skills that may be helpful during a pandemic.

- [Chapter 8A questionnaire – care competencies assessment Parts I & II](#) - includes a competency-based self assessment tool on pages 8-25

If you are thinking about volunteering in the event of an influenza pandemic, some questions to consider include:

- What skills or competencies will be required in a pandemic situation? - see [Chapter 8A questionnaire – care competencies assessment Parts I & II](#)
- Am I currently competent to perform any of these skills or competencies?
- Can I reasonably be trained (or retrained) to perform these activities?
- Do I have the authority to perform these activities? - see the Standard & Guide for Professional Practice: Performing Controlled Acts
- What are the risks of me performing these activities?
 - for patients
 - for my family
 - for me
- Am I willing/able to volunteer? What is the right thing to do?
- Do I have additional language or other skills that may be helpful?
- Where can I best be of assistance within my organization or local public health unit?

Contact your local Public Health Unit to review the guidelines developed for managing emergencies in your municipality and find out how you may be of assistance in your community during an influenza pandemic. To locate a Public Health Unit, [click here](#).

Local Information Resources

- [Locating Public Health Units](#)
- [Local Health Integration Networks \(LHIN\)](#)
- Health Care Provider Hotline 1-866-212-2272

Other Information Resources

- The Conference Board of Canada - [“Ready or Not: Effective Pandemic Response”](#)
- [The Canadian Physiotherapy Association](#) - has both general and setting-specific infection prevention and control practices as well as a checklist for pandemic planning

Summary

An influenza pandemic will impact the lives of all physiotherapists and their patients. It is essential for physiotherapists to take the time to become informed. Proactive steps need to be taken now to develop a plan and ensure that resources are in place for themselves and their family in the event a pandemic outbreak is declared.