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The Public Health Agency of Canada

Pandemic Influenza Preparedness: An Overview

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The Public Health Agency of Canada

- Canada is a federal state with health being the primary responsibility of the provinces and territories (P/Ts)
- The Agency works closely with the P/Ts to help prevent and respond to chronic and infectious diseases
- SARS and other issues led to federal focal point for public health
- The Agency was established in September 2004



The History of Pandemic Planning in Canada

- A long term process that continues to evolve
 - 1988: First draft plan
 - 1996: Second draft plan
 - 2001: F/P/T Working Agreement accepted by all provinces and territories
 - 2002: Pandemic Influenza Committee (PIC) established to provide technical advice for pandemic influenza prevention and control
 - 2004: Release of the initial version of the Plan, after extensive consultations



Overall Goal of Pandemic Preparedness and Response

First, to minimize serious illness and overall deaths, and **second** to minimize societal disruption among Canadians as a result of an influenza pandemic.



Pandemic Influenza Preparedness in Canada

Key Elements

- Canadian Pandemic Influenza Plan
- Pandemic Influenza Vaccine Strategy
- Antiviral Strategy
- Other



Canadian Pandemic Influenza Plan

National plan: outlines roles and responsibilities of all levels of government

- Developed in consultation with the P/Ts
- Includes: Vaccine and Antiviral Strategies, Emergency Response, Public Health Measures (e.g. social distancing)
- Dynamic or “evergreen” document

Challenges: different level of preparedness across the country; extensive resources required to develop and implement plans

Moving forward: update and continue to implement the plan



Pandemic Influenza Vaccine Strategy

- Nationally coordinated approach; goal to provide a vaccine for all Canadians
- In 2001, a ten year pandemic and annual influenza vaccine contract was signed
- In 2005, a contract was signed with a manufacturer as part of \$34 million investment to develop and test a mock pandemic influenza vaccine
- Information sharing and discussions through the Global Health Security Initiative

Challenges: capacity to produce vaccine in short time period to vaccinate whole population

Moving forward: developing and testing a mock pandemic vaccine; develop a distribution plan



Antiviral Strategy

- Options developed by the Pandemic Influenza Committee
- In February 2005, a national antiviral stockpile of 16 million doses of oseltamivir was announced
 - Since then, an additional 19 million doses have been purchased between various levels of government

Challenges: global supply shortage and distribution

Moving forward: ongoing evaluation of antiviral needs and options



Other Elements

- Surveillance – FluWatch, Global Public Health Intelligence Network (GPHIN), the Respiratory Infections Outbreak Response Protocol (RIORP) and the Canadian Public Health Laboratory Network (CPHLN)
- Emergency Management – Emergency Operations Centre, quarantine services and National Health Emergency Management and Response Systems (NHEMRS); November 2005 exercise
- Communications - Established communication networks and active member of WHO's Risk Communications Pandemic Steering Committee
- Research - Influenza immunization program evaluation and established pandemic influenza research priorities



Work with Other Stakeholders

- Ongoing work with the provinces and territories
- Ongoing coordination and cooperation with other government departments
 - Established Deputy Minister level coordinating committee
 - Cooperation with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to link animal and human health; gather intelligence
 - Ensure emergency preparedness across different government departments, including plan for business continuity
- Engaging other stakeholders



International Engagement

- Canada Asia Regional Emerging Infectious Diseases Project
 - 5 year project in South East Asia and China
 - Recent project mission completed in October 2005
- Provide ongoing support to affected countries
 - Mobile lab sent to South East Asia in Fall 2005
 - Technical support
- Close collaboration with international and regional organizations as well as other governments



Conclusion

- Appreciate the efforts of APEC EINet in organizing this symposium
- Addressing the threat of an influenza pandemic requires effort at all levels – within countries, between countries and among international organizations

