

MEMO / NOTE DE SERVICE

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TO: Board of Health for the City of Ottawa Health Unit

DESTINATAIRE : Conseil de santé de la circonscription sanitaire de la ville d'Ottawa

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SUBJECT: REDUCING PREVENTABLE INFECTIOUS DISEASES STRATEGIC
DIRECTION: UPDATE

OBJET : ORIENTATION STRATÉGIQUE SUR LA RÉDUCTION DES MALADIES
INFECTIEUSES ÉVITABLES : MISE À JOUR

PURPOSE

The purpose of this memo is to provide the Board of Health (BOH) with an update on how Ottawa Public Health (OPH) continues to advance the Strategic Direction *Enhance Collective Capacity to Reduce Preventable Infectious Diseases*.

BACKGROUND

Despite historic advances in prevention and treatment, infectious diseases still pose a substantial threat both globally and locally. Some diseases are becoming more prevalent (e.g. Lyme disease) and challenges remain in the control of some long-established infectious diseases (e.g. pertussis, syphilis and tuberculosis) despite earlier advances in the form of antibiotics and/or vaccines. New infectious diseases (e.g. Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus) and diseases not previously seen in Canada (e.g. Zika virus) are also emerging.

In October 2016, the BOH approved the report titled [*Reducing Preventable Infectious Diseases Strategic Direction*](#). This report outlined the four-pronged approach:

1. Increase immunization coverage rates;
2. Enhance preparedness to respond to infectious diseases;
3. Reduce the negative impacts of outbreaks; and
4. Enhance partnerships.

Progress to date

Progress has been made on the *Reducing Preventable Infectious Diseases Strategic Direction* since 2016, as described below.

Increase immunization coverage rates

OPH has made progress on its multi-phased immunization strategy, particularly in strengthened surveillance, as outlined in the [*June 2017 update on the immunization strategy*](#). During the 2015 to 2016 and the 2016 to 2017 school years, OPH reviewed and assessed the immunization records of the approximately 150,000 Ottawa students from kindergarten to grade 12 to ensure that they meet the requirements of the *Immunization of School Pupils Act (ISPA)*. As a result, OPH now has a higher rate of documented immunization and has the information necessary to rapidly identify children at risk in the event of a vaccine preventable disease outbreak.

Moving forward with the immunization strategy, OPH will focus on: reducing inequities and barriers (e.g. language, immigration status) faced by sub-groups of residents; expanding promotion of immunization across the lifespan; and maintaining the work done to improve immunization surveillance.

Enhance preparedness to respond to infectious diseases

Since October 2016, OPH has initiated a number of activities involving internal employees, residents of Ottawa, and/or community stakeholders in order to enhance

our collective capacity to prevent and control infectious diseases in Ottawa. New activities include:

- Education sessions with 135 Para Transpo staff, 40 Ottawa Community Housing security staff, and 25 environmental cleaning staff at Salvation Army and Shepherds of Good Hope shelters to enhance their knowledge of routine practices to incorporate into their daily work activities to prevent and control infections.
- Hand hygiene audits at OPH immunization and tuberculosis (TB) screening clinics, followed by information debriefs with the involved OPH staff. A number of OPH volunteers were trained, as part of a pilot project, to conduct hand hygiene audits in OPH Parenting in Ottawa drop-ins.
- Active TB case-finding clinics were piloted, in collaboration with a number of large shelters and drop-in centres servicing homeless and marginally-housed populations in response to an increased incidence of cases of TB disease involving these facilities.
- Collaboration with four hospitals (CHEO, Queensway Carleton Hospital, The Royal and Montfort) and the Perley-Rideau Veterans' Health Care Centre to offer influenza immunization clinics to staff, visitors and their families.

Ottawa's Health is in Your Hands is an ongoing campaign that OPH continues to build on to promote key infection prevention and control messages in the community (i.e. hand hygiene, cough etiquette, stay home when ill, and get immunized). In December 2016, a new web page, OttawasHealthIsInYourHands.ca, was created for public access to additional resources and best practices on these messages. In addition, digital ads ran for 12 weeks in several Ottawa hospitals, the RA Centre, as well as the YMCA. In 2018, OPH will develop similar digital ads to be displayed on electronic information boards in long-term care homes for staff and visitors.

OPH continues to develop and evaluate the Rapid Response Team (RRT), which was initiated in June 2016 to enhance OPH's capacity to respond to infectious disease issues that require additional resources. This team currently consists of employees from across OPH who can be deployed promptly to support an enhanced or emergency response. The RRT has been deployed several times since it was formed, including during responses to a case of measles, a hepatitis A outbreak involving a child care centre and an elementary school, and to investigate an increasing number of reports of confirmed or probable cases of Lyme disease in our community. Refresher training is being offered on a regular basis for these employees and the team will be expanded moving forward.

Reducing the negative impacts of outbreaks

To reduce the negative impact of outbreaks of infectious diseases in institutions, including long-term care homes, retirement homes and hospitals, OPH developed a three-year outbreak management strategy (2016/2017 to 2018/2019) that identifies a number of key deliverables. During the 2016 to 2017 outbreak season, OPH began posting weekly outbreak status updates online. This will be increased to daily updates in the fall of 2017. Additionally, OPH employees attend Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) meetings and debriefs during and after outbreaks, and facilities now receive an outbreak report within 10 business days of an outbreak being declared over - the purpose of which is to identify specific practices that worked well or practices that require improvement. A number of consultations were provided to retirement homes to enhance their capacity to prevent and control outbreaks; educational sessions and resources were provided upon request for staff of long-term care homes and retirement homes; and facilities receive daily communications during an outbreak in order to ensure all appropriate infection control measures are being implemented.

In 2017 to 2018, OPH plans to develop a sustainable education plan, with interactive sessions and train-the-trainer opportunities for staff of long-term care homes and retirement homes. Samples of infection prevention and control and outbreak management policies and procedures will also be provided for use by these institutions. During the upcoming 2017 to 2018 outbreak season, OPH will continue to build on collaborative activities with hospitals, long-term care homes, retirement homes, Community Care Access Centres (CCAC) and the Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) to ensure timely communication and adherence to IPAC recommendations in order to diminish the spread of infectious diseases in institutions, and from one institution to another (e.g. providing real-time outbreak updates on the CCAC hotline, attending community capacity meetings, providing recommendations regarding resident transfers or repatriation when an institution is experiencing an outbreak, and development of pertinent resources as needed).

Enhance partnerships

In November 2015, the [Enhanced Strategy to Address STBBIs in Ottawa](#) report proposed an increased focus on priority populations for sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections, i.e. those who experience barriers to accessing health services. OPH's work-to-date has included:

- Rebranding and promoting satellite sexual health clinics as part of the LINK OPH youth portal to address the burden of chlamydia and gonorrhea among youth and young adults.
- Establishing new community partnerships (i.e. Indigenous, African, Caribbean and Black and youth-serving organizations), which are helping to expand the reach to priority populations. These partners are identifying ways to enhance the cultural safety of OPH's sexual health and harm reduction services.
- Responding to local need with targeted campaigns, including the Pee STI Testing Challenge (fall of 2016) and syphilis testing campaign (Pride 2016).
- Increasing engagement of primary care practitioners to ensure appropriate testing and treatment of sexually transmitted infections and providing tailored consultation for treatment of gonorrhea and infectious syphilis.

In June 2016, a report titled [Enhanced Harm Reduction Services in Ottawa - Data, Guiding Principles and Next Steps](#) identified the need to expand access to harm reduction services for people who use drugs in Ottawa. Harm reduction supplies are proven to reduce the transmission of blood-borne infections, such as HIV and Hepatitis C. Since 2015, OPH has nearly doubled the number of community partners distributing harm reduction materials, including five pharmacies. In the fall of 2017, along with three partner agencies, OPH will pilot-test the installation of harm reduction distribution machines, designed to expand access to harm reduction materials during times when agencies are closed. OPH has also expanded peer involvement (people with lived experience) in front-line service delivery to educate clients about drug-related harms.

NEXT STEPS

OPH will continue to implement this Strategic Direction to *Enhance Collective Capacity to Reduce Preventable Infectious Diseases* by enhancing preparedness to respond, reducing the negative impacts of outbreaks, enhancing partnerships and increasing immunization rates.

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