

November 10, 2009

An open letter to CNA members from President Kaaren Neufeld

Dear Colleagues:

We are currently experiencing a challenge in the health system in the form of the H1N1 pandemic.

I know that each of you are using your skills and knowledge to play key roles in this pandemic and I am confident in telling governments that Canada's registered nurses are ready and willing to work with governments to minimize the effects of this crisis.

Having a strong evidence base is core to effective nursing care. With this novel virus, new information is frequently becoming available. CNA is committed to supporting your nursing practice by getting timely and relevant information to you. I encourage you to visit the CNA website ([www.cna-aiic.ca](http://www.cna-aiic.ca)) and to consult guidance for health professionals available from the Public Health Agency of Canada ([http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/alert-alerte/h1n1/guidance\\_lignesdirectrices-eng.php](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/alert-alerte/h1n1/guidance_lignesdirectrices-eng.php)).

CNA believes that nurses have a right to make an informed decision on whether to be vaccinated. We encourage nurses to learn about, understand and make informed choices about the H1N1 vaccine. The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) has published on its FightFlu.ca website "frequently asked questions" (FAQs) that may be helpful in answering some of the questions that you are hearing from patients and colleagues. I encourage you to view these links:

- [http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/alert-alerte/h1n1/faq\\_rg\\_h1n1-eng.php](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/alert-alerte/h1n1/faq_rg_h1n1-eng.php)
- [http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/alert-alerte/h1n1/vaccine\\_vaccin-eng.php](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/alert-alerte/h1n1/vaccine_vaccin-eng.php)

For more detailed questions on the safety of the vaccine, including research on the adjuvant, dosing, and adverse reactions, please consult PHAC's [Guidance Document on the Use of Pandemic Influenza A \(H1N1\) 2009 Inactivated Monovalent Vaccine](#). Note that recommendations may change in future as new evidence becomes available.

CNA encourages registered nurses to get the H1N1 vaccination to protect themselves, their families and their patients. The scientific evidence is clear: the important health benefits the vaccine offers far outweigh any potential risks.<sup>1</sup> In addition, a healthy nursing workforce is integral to the effective performance of Canada's health system during the pandemic. That is why CNA urges all nurses to be immunized against H1N1.

CNA also encourages nurses to use appropriate personal protective equipment. The Public Health Agency of Canada has recommended the N95 respirator only for aerosol-generating medical procedures.<sup>2</sup> CNA acknowledges these as minimum guidelines. However, because there is a risk of airborne transmission of

<sup>1</sup> PHAC. (2009). *Considering the options: Getting the flu versus getting a vaccine or taking an antiretroviral*. Retrieved November 9, 2009 from <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/alert-alerte/h1n1/vacc/options-eng.php>

<sup>2</sup> PHAC. (2009). *Infection prevention and control measures*. Retrieved November 9, 2009 from <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/alert-alerte/h1n1/hp-ps/a1-eng.php#t4>

Page 2

November 10, 2009

H1N1, CNA is taking a precautionary approach, and is strongly recommending that registered nurses use a N95 respirator when providing care for any patient with H1N1 or an influenza-like illness.

CNA knows that the health system will not fare well if the largest group of health professionals – that is, nurses – falls ill and can't report to work. CNA supports the application of precautionary measures to protect the public and staff in dealing with H1N1. In this light, CNA is working with officials at the Public Health Agency of Canada to ensure their guidance is grounded in the reality of nursing practice and that it supports the health of patients, providers and the health system.

I welcome your comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kaaren Neufeld".

Kaaren Neufeld, RN, MN

President

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