



NEWS

Local health works to keep doctors supplied with flu vaccine

HKPR health unit has distributed about 42,000 doses

By [Catherine Whitnall](#) Kawartha Lakes This Week

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The local health unit continues to weather the bumps in the road when it comes to distributing influenza vaccine to area health care providers.

According to medical officer of health Dr. Lynn Noseworthy, the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit has shipped roughly 42,000 flu shot doses - enough to cover more than 22 per cent of residents in Northumberland and Haliburton counties and City of Kawartha Lakes - and is keeping supplies that arrive weekly at Port Hope and Lindsay offices moving to health care providers.

Unfortunately, said Noseworthy the health unit has sometimes had to reduce the number of doses sent. In some instances, the regular flu shot (quadrivalent) has been substituted for a high dose request. The health unit currently has no high dose vaccines available. It is unknown, at this time, the number of additional doses will be received from the province.

The health unit does not supply pharmacies which are struggling to keep up with demand. Some pharmacies have had to create wait lists and are working to whittle these down as quickly as possible.

Board of Health chair Doug Elmslie said he has spoken with a number of pharmacies in the Fenelon Falls area who have asked the health unit to plead their case to the province.

“Many are running short (of vaccine) and worry about their customers,” said Elmslie, many of whom are elderly.

Dr. Ian Gemmill, who will serve as interim medical officer of health between Noseworthy’s retirement Dec. 15 and April 5 when Dr. Natalie Bocking takes over, said the situation is “distressing” but pointed out the pandemic could potentially provide an “upside”. He explained, in southern hemisphere countries where winter occurs during Canada’s summer, there were reports of reduced numbers of influenza cases. He hopes the same will happen here.

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“It’s a case of viral competition,” said Gemmill. “When there is another virus

occurring, like the coronavirus, other viruses have a hard time infecting people.”

Elmslie added the fact many people continue to follow the public health guidelines of hand washing, sanitizing, wearing masks and staying home when ill - on top of getting a flu shot - should have a positive impact.

The best part, noted Gemmill, is, if there are reduced cases of influenza, it will mean less demand on emergency department resources that can be focused toward dealing with COVID-19.

“And that’s really good news.”

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