

ATTACKING THE ANNUAL ONSLAUGHT OF ACES AND PAINS

# Drug might beat flu epidemic

BY JENNIFER BROWN  
Staff Writer

**Y**ou feel achy, tired and feverish.

It's a feeling that has knocked thousands on their backs this winter, but you don't have to suffer thanks to new antiviral medications now approved in Canada.

"For every year until now, managing the flu is what your mother taught you — get rest and drink plenty of fluids. But now we have some treatments that work and are tolerable," said Michael Silverman, an infectious disease control specialist from the Oshawa site of Lakeridge Health Corporation.

Silverman was speaking to a group of Markham pharmacists and family doctors last week about two new flu drugs — Relenza and Tamiflu, released in Canada this winter.

"These are breakthrough drugs," said Silverman, explaining they are designed to target the flu virus before it becomes full blown, reducing the duration and severity of suffering.

If the flu is caught soon enough, the drugs will reduce the incidence of complications in the elderly and other high-risk patients and lower their need for antibiotics.

Every year, the flu translates into 1.5 million days of lost work and, in worst cases, up to 7,000 people will

die of the flu.

The flu virus infects the cells that line the inside of the respiratory tract. Some symptoms are from the effects of the virus in the respiratory tract, such as a cough or a sore throat, but other symptoms are from the immune system trying to fight the virus, such as fever, headache, chills and muscle aches.

*"The probability is high that another dangerous new strain of the influenza virus will emerge."*

In an average year, one in six Canadians or five million people are affected by the flu, with up to 75,000 hospitalized, half of those being elderly.

The worst flu outbreak occurred after the First World War, between 1918 and 1919 when the Spanish flu killed 20 million people and Silverman said another worldwide bout of deadly flu is on its way again.

"Epidemiologists believe the probability is high that another dangerous new strain of the influenza virus will emerge."

But until scientists determine what that dangerous strain will be, the new flu drugs can go a long way to preventing misery this year and

they have few, if any, side-effects.

When inhaled, Zanamivir, known under the brand name Relenza, is immediately deposited to the respiratory tract using a diskhaler or puffer. It requires that users take two inhalations of the medication in the morning and two in the afternoon for five days, preferably within two days of feeling symptoms.

Tamiflu, the pill form, is also quickly absorbed.

If the drug is taken after the first 48 hours of symptoms appearing and the fever disappears, viral replication has finished.

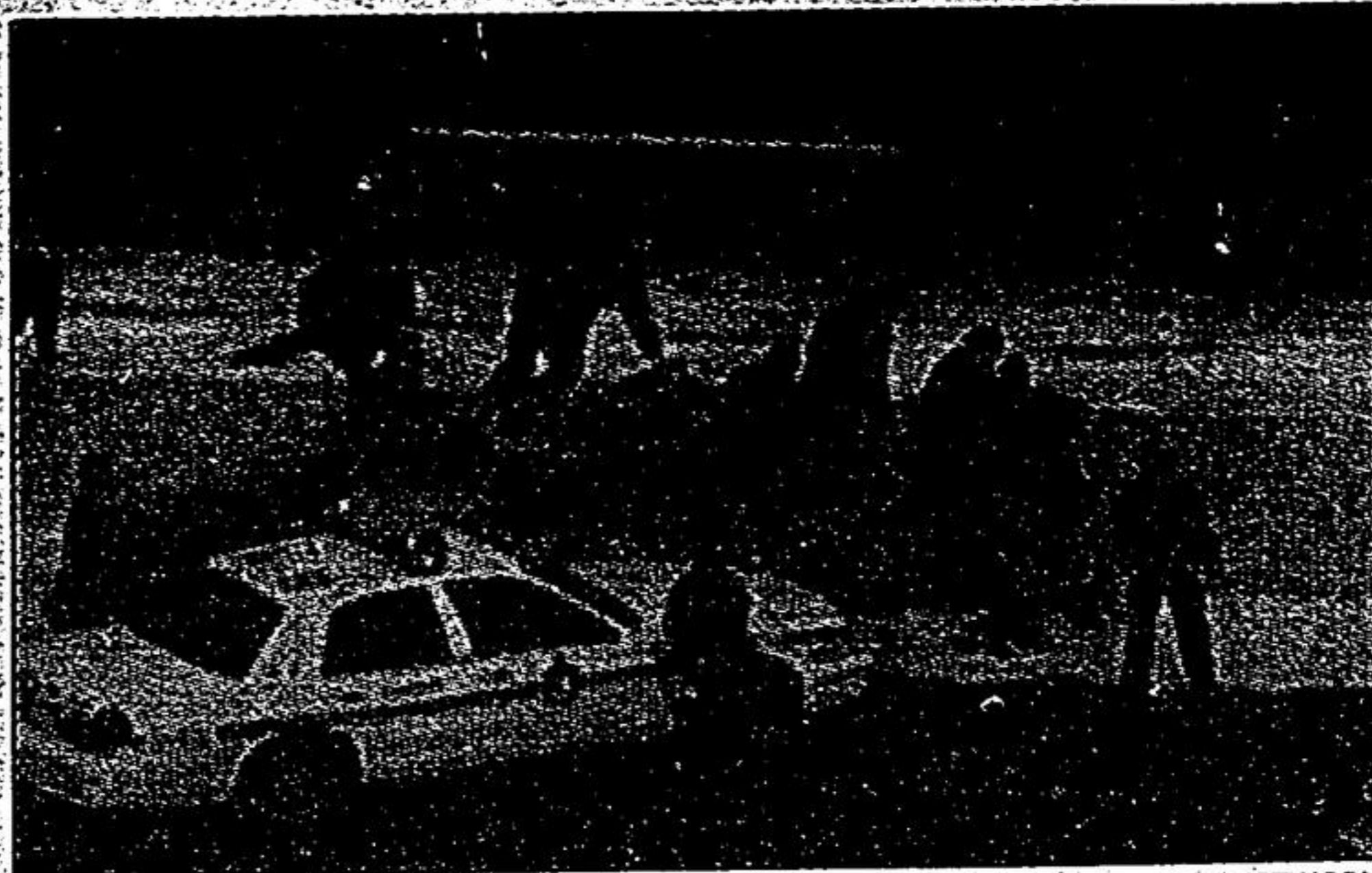
The flu is recognized by two main symptoms — a high fever of between 37 and 40 C; a prominent headache and/or aches and pains. Other symptoms include extreme exhaustion, fatigue, weakness and coughing.

If you have two of those symptoms, there is a 70-per-cent chance you have the flu.

"Unlike a cold, people can usually tell you when and what time their flu started — it's a very sudden onset," Silverman said.

Silverman says Relenza is easily taken and provides fast results — in tests 91 per cent of patients who tried the drug were able to take in 90 per cent of the medicine.

But Silverman cautioned that the drugs are not a replacement for the flu vaccine and are not yet being used as a preventive treatment



PHOTO/FORSTAR NETWORK

York Regional Police surrounded a shoplifting suspect after a pursuit on Hwy. 404 last Thursday.

## Injuries too minor to warrant probe

*Police caught on tape appear to kick and pistol-whip suspect*

BY RICK VANDERLINDE  
Staff Writer

The province's Special Investigations Unit isn't probing a controversial takedown by York Regional Police on Hwy. 404 last week because the suspect's injuries aren't considered serious enough.

"It doesn't fit their mandate," said Supt. Don Kirk, head of York Region's internal affairs unit. "They only get involved if the person is deemed to suffer serious injury."

Under the Police Services Act, a police force involved in a high-speed pursuit must inform the SIU if a suspect is seriously injured or killed.

The police watchdog has a specific definition of "serious injury," a definition York police don't believe fits the suspect's injuries.

The arrest, which occurred on Hwy. 404 near Steeles Avenue following a chase, was caught on a video camera by a helicopter news crew.

During the arrest, a knife-wielding shoplifting suspect was struck on the head twice with police handguns.

It appears he was struck on the back of the head the first time to stop him from fleeing and was struck a second time to stop him from getting up.

Although the suspect is hidden from the camera's view, one officer appears to stomp on the man's legs three or four times while he is lying behind a stolen truck.

SIU spokesperson Gail Scala

said although York Regional Police never deemed the injuries serious enough to inform the SIU, investigators are following the case through the media.

"If we had some concerns, we may still look into a case," Scala said. "But unless we had different information from somewhere else, then we would assume (the police position) was the case."

Police assertions that the Toronto man wasn't seriously injured contradict television reports that he was severely beaten by about 12 officers.

Chief Julian Fantino told reporters last week he initiated an investigation by internal affairs in response to "inflammatory" accounts by television media.

"(Television reports) said police had beat him to a pulp and pistol-whipped him," Fantino said. "As a result, we need to clear the air and get to the bottom of things."

While the suspect may have been "bloodied" during the arrest, that blood may have come from a police officer whose head was cut during the melee.

"That officer required some stitches, but how he was cut I can't say, that's part of the investigation," said Kirk, who is heading the internal probe.

The suspect is charged with assault with a weapon, however, that charge was not connected to a officer being cut. The charge regards a security guard who was threatened with a knife while trying to arrest a man for shoplifting just before the chase.

## FROZEN FUN



STAFF PHOTO/MIKE BARRETT

Scudding across the frozen expanse of a local pond are Christina Rajack and her daughters, Natalie, 2, and Kristiana, 7.

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