

October 23, 2009

Dear Health Professional:

**RE: Appropriate Antiviral Use for Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 Influenza in British Columbia**

On October 1, 2009, the BC Centre for Disease Control released a portion of the provincial pandemic supply of the antiviral medication oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) to all community and hospital pharmacies.

The provincial pandemic supply of Zanamivir (Relenza®) was not released. It is being reserved for cases in which oseltamivir is not an option (e.g., patients with documented oseltamivir-resistance, intolerance to oseltamivir, or unable to take oral medications).

**Use of the Provincial Pandemic Supply is for Treatment Only**

The provincial supply of oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) is for early (within 48 hours) **treatment** of patients with:

- moderate to severe illness, or
- mild illness but who may be at higher risk for complications.

Oseltamivir is available at no charge to any patient with a prescription who meets one of these criteria.

The provincial supply of oseltamivir is not to be dispensed to asymptomatic patients, for prophylaxis or for patients planning to travel.

Please see “Priority Indications for Use” on page 2 for more information.

**Usual Duration and Dose of Oseltamivir for Treatment**

The **treatment dose** of oseltamivir for most adults and for children 13 years and over is 75mg orally, twice daily for 5 days.

Note: For dosing in younger children and adults with renal impairment refer to the Community Physician Office Antiviral Treatment Guidelines available at [www.hls.gov.bc.ca/pho/pdf/Community%20Physician%20Office%20Antiviral%20Treatment%20Guidelines.pdf](http://www.hls.gov.bc.ca/pho/pdf/Community%20Physician%20Office%20Antiviral%20Treatment%20Guidelines.pdf).

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A **5-day treatment course** is recommended for most patients (including those with renal dysfunction) in both community and acute care settings. Longer treatment may be considered for patients in intensive care. Antiviral medications are **not** recommended for pre/post-exposure prophylaxis, except in the outbreak situations specified by the Medical Health Officer.

### **Initiating Treatment**

Antiviral treatment should begin within 48 hours of symptom onset. Since testing is not routinely recommended, treatment should start as soon as possible after influenza symptoms present. If appropriate, treatment should be reviewed when laboratory test results are available.

### **Priority Indications for Use**

The province is seeking to preserve the effectiveness of antivirals, to minimize the incidence of resistance, and to ensure the pandemic supply is used appropriately.

Please consider the following indications for use when you suspect a patient has influenza based on clinical presentation coupled with the presence of H1N1 influenza in the community:

- 1) All patients (including children) with moderate to severe clinical influenza-like illness (ILI), regardless of whether they are admitted to hospital; or**
- 2) Mild illness in those who may be at higher risk for complications, including:**
  - Pregnant women
  - Adults and children with chronic health conditions including:
    - cardiac or pulmonary disorders (including bronchopulmonary dysplasia, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, cystic fibrosis and asthma);
    - diabetes mellitus and other metabolic diseases;
    - cancer, immunodeficiency, immunosuppression (due to underlying disease and/or therapy);
    - renal disease;
    - anemia or hemoglobinopathies; and
    - conditions that compromise the management of respiratory secretions and are associated with an increased risk of aspiration.

### **Clinicians - Protocol for Issuing Prescriptions in Advance**

If offering an advance prescription to a high-risk patient, please:

- Carefully explain to the patient the ILI symptoms that warrant initiation of treatment (e.g., fever, cough, sore throat).
- Advise the patient to fill the prescription only if they develop ILI symptoms.
- On the prescription itself, indicate “Please fill only if symptomatic.”

### **Pharmacists – Requests for prescription fills from asymptomatic patients**

The pandemic supply is not for use in patients who are asymptomatic.

While coverage of drug cost and fees for the provincial pandemic supply continues unchanged, as of October 21, 2009, PharmaCare does not cover the commercial supply of oseltamivir or zanamivir.

If the patient is asymptomatic, they can choose to pay to have the prescription filled from the commercial supply. Please see “Usual Duration and Dose of Oseltamivir for Treatment” and “Initiating Treatment” on page 1 and 2 of this document.

### **H1N1 Flu Virus Information Resources for Health Care Providers**

Clinical guidance documents are available on the H1N1 Flu Virus Information website at [www.gov.bc.ca/h1n1/healthcareproviders](http://www.gov.bc.ca/h1n1/healthcareproviders). This section of the H1N1 website has a 'subscribe' feature, allowing you to sign up to receive an e-mail whenever information is added or updated. Pharmacists: For your convenience, PharmaCare Newsletters regarding the antiviral supply are also available on the H1N1 Flu Virus Information site.

We appreciate your efforts caring for patients with the H1N1 influenza virus and will keep you informed of new information about H1N1 as it becomes available.

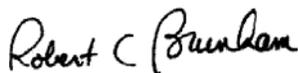
Sincerely,



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