

**Ministry of Health and  
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**Ministère de la Santé et des  
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April 24, 2009

**MEMORANDUM TO:** Municipal EMS Directors  
First Nations EMS Directors  
Ornge

**FROM:** Dennis Brown  
Senior Manager  
Performance & Quality Management

**RE:** **Severe Respiratory Illness (SRI) Advisory Update**

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I am writing to provide a reminder regarding procedures to be followed by EMS agencies in relation to recent reports of a risk of patients suffering severe respiratory illness (SRI) being encountered in Ontario.

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) has reported that a number of SRI cases have been identified in two clusters in Mexico, as well as in Texas and California. As a result, PHAC has raised their travel alert to Level 3. As well, the Canadian government has activated the federal PHAC Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) on a 24 hour a day basis to monitor the situation both in Mexico and in Canada.

The clinical symptoms of the SRI occurring in Mexico include high fever, headache, ocular pain, shortness of breath and extreme fatigue. Rapid progression of symptoms to severe respiratory distress has occurred in approximately five (5) days.

CACCs/ACSs have been directed to include a question about travel to Mexico within the last two weeks for all patients screening positive for febrile respiratory illness (FRI). If a patient with a suspected FRI has travelled to Mexico within the last two weeks, the Ambulance Communications Officer (ACO) will inform all responders that the person is positive for FRI with travel to Mexico within the last two weeks.

## Severe Respiratory Illness (SRI) Advisory Update

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Ambulance service operators are reminded of their responsibilities as outlined in the *Ambulance Service Patient Care and Transportation Standards (revised October 2007)*, Section B – Communicable Disease Management. [http://www.ambulance-transition.com/pdf\\_documents/standards\\_amb\\_service\\_patient\\_care\\_transportation.pdf](http://www.ambulance-transition.com/pdf_documents/standards_amb_service_patient_care_transportation.pdf).

Staff should also be encouraged to review the *Infection Prevention and Control Best Practices Manual for Land Ambulance Paramedics (March 2007)* and reminded to meticulously follow the Routine Practices and Additional Precautions for droplet transmission of infectious diseases (Section Two – page 33 of the manual) for all patients suspected of having FRI. [http://www.ambulance-transition.com/pdf\\_documents/infection\\_prevention\\_&\\_control\\_best\\_practices\\_manual.pdf](http://www.ambulance-transition.com/pdf_documents/infection_prevention_&_control_best_practices_manual.pdf)

In addition to utilizing Routine Practices and Additional Precautions, paramedics must:

- Ask all patients who screen positive for FRI to confirm travel to Mexico within the last two (2) weeks;
- Notify the receiving facility regarding all patients who screen positive for FRI with a travel history to Mexico within the last two (2) weeks.

Additional updates regarding the SRI situation and/or prehospital management of FRI patients will be provided as more information becomes available.

If you have any questions regarding the management of patients with symptoms of FRI, please contact Ms. Cathy Francis, Manager of Education and Patient Care Standards at (416) 327-7843.



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Dennis Brown

- c. Mr. M. Bates  
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