

H₁N₁ Influenza Pandemic

Should the threat of a full-scale H1N1 pandemic outbreak become a reality this fall, it will be important for RTs to have effective processes in place that will facilitate access to information with regards to their local, regional and provincial pandemic plans, as well as information as to what is happening at the national and international level.

In an effort to assist Ontario RTs during this public health emergency, the College of Respiratory Therapists of Ontario (CRTO), the Respiratory Therapy Society of Ontario (RTSO) and the Canadian Society of Respiratory Therapists (CSRT) have outlined, by way of this communiqué, the roles and responsibilities of their respective organizations. Our goal is to provide a roadmap on how and where to access pandemic-related information, as well as to provide some tools to facilitate networking and the exchange of information with regards to standards of care, human resources issues, emergency registration and liability insurance.

During catastrophic events, Respiratory Therapists are always at the “head of the bed”. There may be situations in which the RT requires personal professional liability insurance (working in an untraditional role or location or where for some reason the RT is not covered by their employer's liability insurance). The CSRT and RTSO provides professional liability insurance at a reasonable cost to their members and it is recommended that RTs purchase personal professional liability insurance which also includes provisions for legal defence costs in case of disciplinary action.



College of Respiratory Therapists of Ontario (CRTO)

As outlined in its *Emergency Preparedness Plan*, a key role of the CRTO during an influenza pandemic outbreak will be to ensure that all Respiratory Therapists (RT) working in Ontario have access to the information that they need to practice safely and effectively. In addition, the expectation that Members provide care in a competent manner in accordance with the CRTO standards of practice will continue throughout an influenza pandemic. In order to support this the College will make every effort to continue core services throughout the duration of an outbreak. This includes:

- acting as a liaison between government, Members and employers to ensure information is available in a timely and easily accessible manner (by phone or via the CRTO website).
- working collaboratively with other regulatory bodies and professions to ensure best practices and other information is shared to provide optimal patient care.
- outlining the CRTO's expectation during a pandemic, particularly with respect to the standards of care.
- providing specific professional practice advice via email and telephone.
- in the event additional human resources are required from outside of the province, the CRTO will initiate emergency registration procedures.

The College strongly encourages Respiratory Therapists in Ontario to ensure that they are aware of their respective employer's Pandemic Plan and to understand what will be expected of them during such an event.

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CANADIAN SOCIETY OF RESPIRATORY THERAPISTS

SOCIÉTÉ CANADIENNE DES THÉRAPEUTES RESPIRATOIRES

As the national professional association, the role of the Canadian Society of Respiratory Therapists is to support the profession and provide leadership at the national level. A key role for the CSRT during an influenza pandemic outbreak is to be an effective advocate for the profession in the national/international forum. In this role the CSRT will:

- disseminate position statements and health communiqués on behalf of the profession.
- disseminate pertinent information regarding the pandemic from relevant national and international health organizations (Public Health Agency of Canada, World Health Organization, etc.) to RTs across Canada.
- explore the provision of professional development and educational opportunities at a reasonable cost for its members.
- facilitate communication between RTs across Canada through its professional practice and leadership listserv services (a listserv is an interactive electronic mailing list and provides a mechanism for CSRT members to share expertise, information and collaborate via ongoing discussion emails).
- facilitate dialogue between provincial regulatory bodies and professional associations by providing web site links and disseminating relevant information and communiqués.

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Respiratory Therapy Society of Ontario

Société de la Thérapie Respiratoire de l'Ontario

Representing the professional interest of Respiratory Therapists, the RTSO serves as the provincial voice of the profession of respiratory therapy, voicing concerns in a consistent, unified fashion. During an influenza pandemic outbreak the RTSO will:

- facilitate province-wide collaboration and communication amongst Respiratory Therapists regarding clinical issues and best practices through the RTSO website, including via blogs and alerts.
- harness provincial respiratory therapy expertise and ensure that the collective knowledge is available for the healthcare teams and administrative decision makers.
- promote leadership and direction in response to the needs of the healthcare and provincial respiratory therapy communities through shared communications such as video conferencing.
- collaborate with the CRTO, CSRT, and other stakeholder groups to share valuable insights and ensure safe, quality healthcare for our patients and the providers.
- establish a voluntary respiratory therapy department registry on the RTSO website to support interdepartmental communication and collaborative practice.

The RTSO will utilize its new website www.rtsso.ca which will be launched September 26th 2009 to facilitate the above.

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