

October 29, 2014

RVH protects against flu for safety of patients

Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre (RVH) staff, physicians, volunteers and students are once again being given the opportunity to receive their influenza immunization without leaving the health centre. This year's immunizations are being offered as part of RVH's 'Who are you doing it for campaign?' which asks staff, physicians, volunteers and students contemplating immunization to consider everyone they could protect – patients, colleagues, families and themselves – if they receive the flu shot.

"I'm doing it for our patients because safety is our promise and we take it very seriously at RVH," says Janice Skot, president and CEO, RVH. "Many of our patients are health-compromised and it is our responsibility to protect them. Getting the flu can make them extremely ill, and in some cases, even cause death. We want our patients to be safe so if there are steps we can take to ensure this, we should take them."

Flu shots are not mandatory at RVH. Staff, physicians, volunteers and students have a choice of how they want to protect their patients and themselves. Last year RVH strengthened its influenza policy which resulted in immunization rates jumping to 60 per cent - up from less than 50 per cent the previous year. The 2013 policy changes included enhanced requirements during widespread community or RVH influenza activity such as wearing masks and taking anti-viral medication if they are not immunized.

"I'm doing it for my colleagues," says David Coward, chief human resources officer, RVH. "At RVH we continually strive for a healthy workplace. In addition to protecting our patients from the flu, we need to have the appropriate levels of staff available to provide safe, high quality healthcare to them throughout the coming months when we usually see an influx in patients with flu-like symptoms. Protecting our colleagues means that they're not home sick with the flu – they are here at RVH meeting our patient's needs and providing exceptional care."

As part of RVH's commitment to making patient safety a priority, in the coming months all patients will be screened for influenza upon arrival at RVH's Emergency department or other patient registration areas. Anyone exhibiting flu-like symptoms, which include sudden onset of fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, muscle and joint pain and headache, will be required to put on a mask and, whenever possible, will be isolated from other patients.

Outline: Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre president and CEO Janice Skot (far left) and chief human resources officer David Coward (far right) receive their annual flu shots from registered nurses Liz Pipher (centre left) and Manochehr Samya-Kalantariwith (centre right). RVH is currently offering influenza immunizations to RVH staff, physicians, volunteers and students as part of its promise to provide safe, high quality care to patients. The theme for RVH's internal flu shot campaign focuses on the question 'who are you doing it for?' which asks staff, physicians, volunteers and students contemplating immunization to consider everyone they could protect – patients, colleagues, families and themselves – if they receive the flu shot.

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About RVH:

RVH is a regional health centre in Barrie, Ontario, located 80 kilometres north of Toronto. As the largest hospital in the region of Simcoe Muskoka, RVH's team of over 350 physicians, 2,500 employees and 850 volunteers provides exceptional care and specialty services to almost half a million residents, including cancer care, stroke services, orthopaedics, intensive care, mental health and interventional radiology. RVH is focused on delivering high-quality, safe care that puts patients and their families first. For more information visit www.rvh.on.ca