

November 26, 2009

For Immediate Release

FLU ASSESSMENT CENTRE CLOSING

The Simcoe County Flu Assessment Centre, at Westminster Presbyterian Church on Steel Street in Barrie, will continue to operate through the weekend, however, will officially close as of Monday, November 30, as a result of a steady decline in the number of patients.

The centre opened November 16th to quickly assess individuals with influenza-like symptoms, while reducing the burden of non-urgent cases on overwhelmed hospital emergency departments and walk-in clinics. Although the centre was initially very busy, during the past several days a decreasing number of patients are visiting the centre.

“The flu assessment centre provided care for nearly 300 people over the past two weeks,” says Dr. Monica Wolnik, Medical Director of the assessment centre. “The model that we used to screen, assess and treat patients was extremely effective. It also allowed us to come together, quickly, as a community to determine how to best utilize our health care resources in response to a pressing health issue. In the future, if we begin to see the incidence of influenza increase in our community, we have the strategies in place to be able to re-open the centre.”

The centre, a partnership between Royal Victoria Hospital, the County of Simcoe, North Simcoe Muskoka Community Care Access Centre, the Barrie and Community Family Health Team, the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit and City of Barrie, had a positive impact on RVH. At the height of the second wave of H1N1, volumes in Royal Victoria Hospital’s department skyrocketed between 30 and 50 per cent, creating long waits for patients exhibiting mild-flu-like symptoms. In the vast majority of these cases, patients had mild symptoms and they were sent home to recover.

“The centre relieved pressure on Royal Victoria Hospital’s Emergency Department during the second wave of the flu, says Dr. Jeff Eisen, Clinical Director RVH Emergency. “By diverting those patients with non-urgent influenza symptoms, the ER team was able to focus on acutely ill patients while shortening the wait for flu patients.”

Signage will be posted at the Flu Assessment Centre announcing the closure, as well as on the partners’ websites.

As of November 30th, people experiencing mild to moderate flu-like symptoms have the following options available to them:

- Go to http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/ccom/flu/h1n1/public/tools/assessment/sa_charts_en.pdf to complete the Influenza Self-Assessment Tool
- Call Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000
- Call your health care provider or visit a walk-in clinic or urgent care centre

For more information on H1N1, visit the RVH website at www.rvh.on.ca or call 705-728-9802 x49020 for a recorded update.

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For more information:

Suzanne Legue
Sr. Director, Corporate Communications
705-728-9090 ext. 41600

Jane Cocking
Corporate Communications
705-728-9090 ext. 41611

Jennifer Acheson
Corporate Communications
705-728-9090 ext. 41618