



Renfrew County and District Health Unit

"Optimal Health for All in Renfrew County and District"

Tuesday, June 27, 2023

Medical Officer of Health Report to the Board

Health Protection Highlights

Immunization

RCDHU has concluded all active immunization surveillance efforts related to the Immunization of School Pupils Act (ISPA) for the 2022-2023 school year. As a result of active surveillance and vaccination efforts, the number of students who are not up to date has decreased by approximately half in Renfrew County and District (RCD). In January 2023, 28% of students were overdue for ISPA vaccines. As of May 29th, 2023, this has been reduced to 14% of students. RCDHU will continue to promote and provide access to immunization services for students, as well as the general population, over the summer months through community-based immunization clinics.

On June 5th, 2023, the Kids Come First Health Team launched its pilot vaccination campaign to help children and youth in Eastern Ontario catch-up on routine immunizations. RCDHU is a partner of this campaign and will be working with Rainbow Valley Community Health Center and Connectwell Community Health – Beachburg, to provide immunization clinics for children and youth in RCD during the fall of 2023. This campaign will support an online booking platform provided by CANImmunize through the Clinic Flow app. RCDHU staff will be supporting these clinics by providing vaccine care and control, immunization record assessment, immunizations, and appointment booking support for those with no internet access. For more information on this initiative visit the news release available [here](#).

Fall planning activities have commenced to support the 2023-2024 Fall Booster Campaign for both Influenza and COVID-19 vaccines. The COVID-19 vaccine fall booster is anticipated to align with the fall Universal Influenza Immunization Campaign. RCDHU will continue to engage with health care partners as we work through the planning phases of this campaign.

Healthy Environments

The Healthy Environments section program focus has shifted to summer seasonal inspections and work activities.

Public health inspectors are in the process of active tick surveillance (tick dragging) at 6 strategic locations. So far, the presence of ticks from dragging were identified in the Pembroke and Renfrew. Therefore, these two locations will be dragged again in the fall. Ticks found in the fall will determine if these become Lyme disease risk areas. In relation to passive tick surveillance (those brought to the health unit), RCDHU has submitted 33 ticks for identification and testing so far in 2023.

Under the rabies control program, RCDHU is highlighting an animal bite prevention campaign over the next few weeks called the Yellow Ribbon Campaign to raise awareness of the burden of dog bites, which can result in injury, the need for rabies post-exposure prophylaxis, and significant cost/inconvenience to those affected. Several pet stores and veterinary clinics across the county have partnered with RCDHU to get the message out. In total, over social media, there were 55,864 views, 156 likes, and 374 shares generated from 10 posts.

Within the safe water portfolio, public beach water sampling began on June 19th. There are 30 beaches to sample throughout the summer season. Typical sampling frequency is once per week for beaches that historically are popular and have had adverse sample results. Other beaches are sampled every second or third week. As of June 15th, 2023, the total number of inspections of recreational water facilities completed is 44 (pools and spas). Furthermore, 19 small drinking water systems have been inspected this year.

Under food safety, as of June 15th, 2023, the total number of routine and follow up food inspections completed is 606 (high 201, moderate 227, low 178). There were 9 total inspections undertaken to investigate a food complaint.

Health Promotion Highlights

Harm Reduction Program

So far this year, Renfrew County and District Health Unit (RCDHU) has released three alerts related to an increase in suspected overdose-related deaths, overdose calls, emergency department visits and other negative drug-related reactions in Renfrew.

In response, RCDHU has enhanced our monitoring and surveillance efforts. A memo was sent to community partners requesting enhanced reporting to RCDHU and a partner meeting was held following the latest alert. In addition, RCDHU has written an internal overdose response procedure and will be training staff to administer naloxone, should an overdose occur on RCDHU property (Pembroke Office).

RCDHU also works closely with over 30 community partners including the County of Renfrew Paramedics, Pembroke Regional Hospital, Police, Ontario Addiction Treatment

Centre (OATC), and Addiction Treatment Services (ATS), to monitor the local overdose situation, share data and qualitative information, distribute harm reduction supplies including naloxone, and provide overdose response training. The information shared helps to identify how the community can respond to increases in opioid-related overdoses and/or the detection of high-potency opioid formulations that have the potential to cause harm or death in the community and challenge responder resources.

Since January 1st, 2023, RCDHU staff have had 632 interactions with clients accessing harm reduction services, including 75 new clients. Staff have distributed 165,800 needles and have had 86,762 needles returned on site, for an estimated return rate of 52.3%. The number of needles returned does not include those that are collected by the City of Pembroke at drop boxes located throughout Pembroke.

As of June 1st, staff have distributed 252 naloxone kits to harm reduction clients, while our community partners have received 318 naloxone kits from RCDHU to distribute as part of the Ontario Naloxone Program (ONP).

Organization and MOH Updates

alPHA 2023 Conference and Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Vice Chair Joanne King and I attended the alPHA conference and AGM in Toronto this month. As alPHA's first in-person meeting since the beginning of the pandemic, it was an excellent opportunity to reconnect with colleagues, discuss ideas, and address common challenges facing local public health agencies across Ontario. Some of the activities, topics, and discussion included insights from Dr. Greg Wells to support wellness while performing at the highest level, a panel including Dr. Kieran Moore, discussion of alPHA's strategic plan, addressing burnout in public health, and learning from the pandemic. We will continue working with other public health agencies across the province on these and other areas of work.

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