



United Nurses of Alberta

Local 115

Foothills Medical Centre & Satellites

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Issue 44

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Message from the President

(May 2009)

The Time for Change is Now

We have now seen Dr Duckett assume leadership of Alberta Health Services. With his new appointment, the region will undergo some major changes. As of April 1st, we are now officially, one large health region. With this integration into a provincial system, many questions have been asked by the UNA membership. The primary question being raised by union membership is how will this integration impact nurses, and their ability to continue to provide exemplary levels of nursing care.

As Alberta Health Services and the Conservative Government continues with their plans for restructuring, the local executive plans to communicate these initiatives to our membership as we receive them, and evaluate each and every provincial decision. Your local leadership believes communication is one of the hallmarks of leadership. Secondly, as nurses, we must demand that government place people and patients before money. Collectively, nurses in Alberta are in a strong position to take action to force the government to commit to protecting the public health care system. Union membership must ensure the government hears our concerns, and respond appropriately to our message. Thirdly, UNA membership must be ready to stand up for our concerns and raise their voices to ensure our message is heard by the government. Lastly, Union membership must be ready to be united, towards a goal of patient safety before all else.

In April our provincial leadership, along with members of Local 121, were given the opportunity to take Dr Duckett on a hospital walk-through at RockyView General Hospital. Our concern for patient safety, due to the growing trend of over complement beds being utilized DAILY as extensions to most units, was clearly explained to Dr Duckett. United Nurses of Alberta has recognized patient safety, privacy, and dignity issues are being compromised by this ongoing practice. UNA leadership believes this message was heard loud and clear by the new head of Alberta Health Services.

With the expiration of the current collective agreement coming in March of 2010, UNA is preparing to continue the "fight for the fair treatment of nurses and patient rights". I encourage all of the union membership to express ideas for change by contacting the UNA local office either by phone at 403-670-9960 or by email to local115exec@una.ab.ca The process of

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provincial demand setting will take place this coming November. Change can take place when we stand together united, to fight for what is right. The time for change is now

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UNA Local 115 General Meeting

Date: May 5, 2009
Time: 1600
Location: FMC, AGW4



Swine Influenza A (H1N1)

Respiratory Protection for Nurses:
Latest Update and Position Statement from United Nurses of Alberta (Page 5 & 6)



May Day is celebrated and recognized as the International Workers' day, chosen over 100 years ago to commemorate the struggles and gains of workers and the labour movement. Most notable reasons to celebrate are the 8-hour day, Saturday as part of the weekend, improved working conditions and child labor laws. But these gains were not attained without the solidarity of workers. We recognize and commemorate May Day not only for its historical significance, but also as a time to organize and speak out around issues that are impacting working people today.

Nurses at Calgary airport

CBC News, Apr 27, 2009.

The Public Health Agency of Canada has stationed nurses at the Calgary airport, along with eight other major Canadian airports. Customs officers, who have been trained by the agency to spot flu symptoms among passengers entering Canada, will send those with fever, chills, a severe cough or respiratory distress to a quarantine nurse.



Calgary-based WestJet said it will be handing out complimentary breathing masks and hand sanitizer to all of its Mexico-bound passengers. (CBC)

One passenger at the Calgary airport on the weekend told CBC News she was glad to be home from a 10-day vacation in Mexico.

Continued in next column...

Events Calendar

Local 115 Local Meeting

Date: May 5, 2009

Place: AGW4 (Ground Floor FMC)

Time: 1600-1800

National Nursing Week

Date: May 10-16, 2009

Stand Up for Public Health Care Rally

Date: May 9, 2009

Place: Edmonton

UNA Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Date: Oct 24, 25 & 26 - 2009

Place: Edmonton

UNA Demand Setting

Date: Nov 24, 25 & 26, 2009

Place: Edmonton

"Everybody is really afraid, because it is all over the news in Mexico. People dying, people trying to keep extra precautions. Because it's not the cleanest country to begin with, so it's scary," said Terri Pozniak, who otherwise enjoyed her trip.

Mexican citizen Graceiela Mata and her husband arrived at the Calgary airport en route to Banff and were trying to not let the situation back home dampen their honeymoon plans. "We're going back six days from now and we don't know how big it is going to be. We are worried because we have family and friends in Mexico City where the sickest people are right now," she said.

Robert Palmer, a WestJet spokesman, said Monday the Calgary-based airline will hand out complimentary breathing masks and hand sanitizer to all of its Mexico-bound passengers. The company is also looking at scrubbing down every one of its passenger jets leaving or landing in Mexico.

 **SPOTLIGHT on your UNA Contract****Shift Schedule****REAL Notification on a shift schedule change**

The Employer can make adjustments to change a scheduled shift without penalty with 14 or more days notice. However, each affected Employee **MUST** be properly notified. Notification issues have come up with email. For example, an email message to an Employee's work email address, on a weekend when they are not at work, does **NOT** constitute notice.

The Provincial Collective Agreement addresses this in article 7.04 (b):

Employees shall be notified of such changes in their schedule and such changes shall be recorded on the Shift schedule.

The Employee must be notified through a reliable and confirmable method. This could happen by phone, in person, or whatever method of communication is normally used between managers and staff.

The shift change must also be made on the posted schedule. Changing the posted scheduled shift is not enough by itself, and notifying each affected Employee is not enough. Both must be done.

Without proper notice of at least 14 days, the Employer is liable for a 2X penalty for the first shift of a changed schedule.

— Article 7.04 UNA Provincial Collective Agreement

Agreement: 2007 - 2010 UNA Provincial (Multi-Employer)

Named Holidays**Employers CANNOT just pay out Named holidays****Nurses moving to part-time can keep their “banked stats”**

Anyone who works on a Named Holiday must get an alternate day off at “a mutually agreed time”. The “day in lieu” can be added to the Employee's vacation, or the Employee can ask to take it at any time, with the Employer's agreement. The day can also be “paid out” but **ONLY** if the Employee agrees.

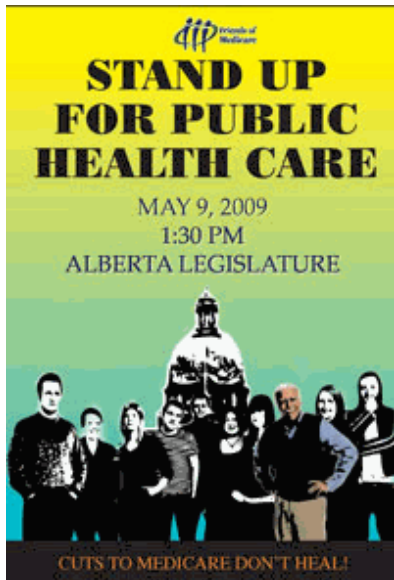
Recent cases have come to light of Employers paying out named holidays for full-time nurses who move to part-time. This is a violation of the contract. A full-time employee who changes to part-time keeps any alternate days off in the “bank” until there is an agreed time off or until the Employee agrees to take payment in lieu of a day off.

— Article 18.03 UNA Provincial Collective Agreement

Agreement: 2007 - 2010 UNA Provincial (Multi-Employer)



Stand Up for Public Healthcare Rally!



Friends of Medicare, along with a province-wide coalition of seniors groups, healthcare workers, unions, and concerned citizens, are getting together on May 9th to tell our government that we want positive public improvements to our healthcare system!

Friends of Medicare is organizing buses and car pools from around the province, including from Calgary, Red Deer and Hinton and Lloydminster. Anyone who wants to come to the rally on one of the buses, can contact (403) 286 9283.

UNA surveying on overtime, workloads

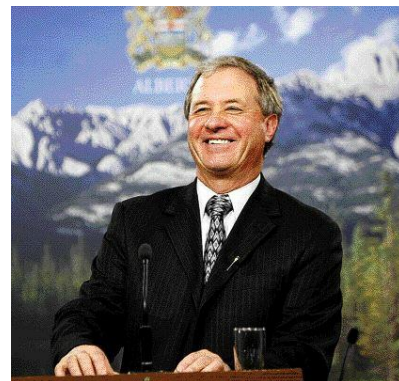
UNA will be conducting another telephone survey of nurses, similar to the survey of last year. Viewpoints Research is handling it and will be asking questions on the quality of care, the amount nurses work (FT, PT casual), overtime, etc.

As with our last survey, we will be talking to 1500 rank and file members. It will cover the province, with approximately 500 from the Calgary area, 500 from the Edmonton area and 500 from the rest of the province. This survey is one of UNA's Nursing Week initiatives.

Employers miss increment on shift premiums

Telus Sourcing Solutions Incorporated (TSSI) failed to add in the increase in shift premiums on April 1 for Calgary area employees, as did the former David Thompson Health Region payroll section. Both TSSI and David Thompson responded when the mistake was pointed out by UNA and the additional amounts owing will be paid in upcoming pay periods. Check your pay slip carefully to be sure you are getting correctly paid. Not all employer computers are correct all the time.

Health minister tries to blame nurse overtime for health deficits



Alberta's Health and Wellness Minister Ron Liepert tried to blame nurses' overtime for health budget deficits in media interviews recently.

"One of the largest cost factors is paying overtime, double time, and triple time to nurses," Liepert told the Calgary Sun.

He said the government has a "horrible" contract with nurses and the province needs "a contract that better serves the members of the nursing profession and better serves the taxpayers."

UNA responded by pointing out that it is the nursing shortage, not nurses, that cause overtime costs and the government created the shortage by laying off 5,000 nurses 15 years ago, and by cutting nursing schools.

"We've worked really hard with Alberta Health Services to try to bring in recruitment and retention initiatives. Mr. Liepert, with these very irresponsible comments, has set us back in our efforts to keep new graduates in this province and to keep nurses working," UNA President Heather Smith said in response to Liepert's remarks.

Swine Influenza A (H1N1) Update April 30, 2009

On April 29, 2009 the World Health Organization Director General announced that she had decided to raise the current level of influenza pandemic alert from phase 4 to phase 5 based on human to human spread of the virus in other countries.

The good news is that to date the confirmed cases in Canada continue to be a milder influenza infection. However, as with any influenza virus outbreak the situation can change at any time as influenza viruses are highly unpredictable. The current focus of the Public Health Agency of Canada is to slow (mitigate) the transmission of the virus.

Guidance for Health Care Workers:

Unfortunately this week there have been several written communications distributed to health care workers in Alberta from Alberta Health Services and Alberta Health and Wellness that provide conflicting information and guidance regarding respiratory protection when providing care to patients with suspected and confirmed influenza A (H1N1).

In addition, the Public Health Agency of Canada issued two versions of "Interim Guidance: Infection prevention and control measures for Health Care Workers in Acute Care Facilities, one dated April 28 and one dated April 30, 2009. The April 28th version advises health care workers to wear an N95 respirator when a patient is coughing and the patient is unwilling or unable to comply with respiratory hygiene. The April 29th version states that N95 respirators are required if the patient is coughing **forcefully** and is unwilling or unable to comply with respiratory hygiene.

The change in the guidance leads to the question, how will a nurse be able to predict that a patient will cough forcefully once she/he enters the room. On April 28, 2009 Dr. Andre Corriveau, Chief Medical Officer of Health for Alberta Health and Wellness issued a letter regarding Guidelines for Human Swine Influenza A (H1N1) for ambulatory health care settings (doctor's offices, drop-in clinics, community health centres, outpost nursing stations etc.) that stated that N95 respirators are indicated for aerosol-generating procedures such as the collection of NP aspirate, intubations, nebulizer treatments, bronchoscopy or suctioning and are indicated for everyone in the room. In addition, he advises that the use of surgical masks for all other contact with suspected or confirmed cases of influenza A (H1N1) are adequate.

On April 29, 2009 Dr. Gerry Predy, Senior Medical Officer of Health for Alberta Health Services issued a memorandum regarding human swine flu in Alberta that advised, "If dealing with patients suspected of having Serious Respiratory Illness or when performing aerosol generating procedures, N95 masks are recommended". This guidance is in line with UNA's policy statement regarding respiratory protection.

The guidance regarding respiratory protection provided by Dr. Corriveau is clearly contrary to the recommendations of the Centres for Disease Control and UNA's position statement. This guidance does not embody the precautionary principle as outlined in Justice Campbell's January 2007 SARS Commission final report. *"Perhaps the most important lesson of SARS is the importance of the precautionary principle. SARS demonstrated over and over the importance of the principle that we cannot wait for scientific certainty before we take reasonable steps to reduce risk"*

In his report Justice Campbell also identified that conflicting information and guidance that was distributed to health care worker from public health, Ontario health care employers, infection control and the Ontario government was a significant factor in the spread of SARS to health care workers.

On April 29, 2009 UNA's Director of Labour Relations, David Harrigan, sent an e-mail to Dr. Corriveau expressing our serious concern regarding the guidance provided in his April 28, 2009 correspondence and the lack of continuity in the guidance being provided to health care workers. Dr Corriveau responded on April 30, 2009 advising that the guidelines he distributed "...reflect the level of caution needed in Alberta at present".

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UNA Position Statement:

It is the position of United Nurses of Alberta that until such time as there is scientific certainty regarding the mode of transmission of Swine Influenza A (H1N1) all Employees covered by the Multi-Employer/UNA Collective Agreement that are required to provide patient care for suspected or confirmed swine influenza A cases must be provided with an appropriate supply of fit-tested N95 respirators and mandatory education regarding the procedures for donning and doffing N95 respirators.

Along with respiratory protection until the manner of causation is known, in addition to routine practices, infection control measures for suspected and confirmed cases of the swine influenza should include contact precautions, respiratory hygiene, accommodation, eye protection, surveillance and reporting.

What You Need to Know:

- **Get Fit Tested!** - The Multi-Employer/UNA Joint Committee has reached an agreement regarding N95 Respirator Provision and Fit Testing, which requires the employer to provide N95 respirator fit-testing to all employees covered by the Multi-Employer/UNA Collective Agreement. **Fit-Testing is mandatory as per Article 35.02 (a)**
- **Ensure you have enough N95 respirators** - The Joint Committee agreement obligates the Employer to ensure that an appropriate supply of N95 respirators is available.
- **You may be temporarily transferred** – In the event of an emergency Article 44: Mobility (44.05 (e)) allows the Employer to reassign Employees from any site to perform work at any other site in emergency circumstances. An emergency is defined as “an unforeseen combination of circumstances or the resulting state that calls for immediate action”. Contact your Local representative or Labour Relations Office for additional information regarding emergency transfers.
- **Do not report to work if you are sick** – Nurses should not be reporting to work if they have influenza like illness (fever and respiratory symptoms). Nurses who do report to work are putting patients and their co-workers at risk of infection and illness. The Alberta Government is asking that individuals with flu like symptoms stay home from work and avoid public places when ill.
- **You do not have to put your health at risk** – The agreement between the parties states that employees who have not been fit-tested for an N95 respirator or are unable to achieve an effective facial seal shall not be expected to enter or provide services in an area where a suspected or confirmed case of swine influenza A has been identified. **These Employees may be deployed to another area.**
- **You need to assess whether you believe that you need to be provided with N95 respirators (fit-tested), gown and eye protection. If your employer refuses then ask to be reassigned.**



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