

Ministry of Health
and Long-Term Care

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July 8, 2005

TO: Physicians in Ontario
Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of Acute Care Hospitals
Infection Control Practitioners (ICPs) of Acute Care Hospitals
Medical Officers of Health

RE: **Human Surveillance and Reporting of West Nile Virus Illness**

West Nile virus (WNV) is expected to be present in Ontario again in 2005 and it remains a priority of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to reduce the incidence of human WNV illness in Ontario.

This package contains information to assist you with recognizing WNV, initiating laboratory investigations when WNV is suspected and reporting WNV cases to the local medical officer of health. Please share this information with other health professionals as necessary in your workplace.

As of May 1, 2003, West Nile Virus illness was specified as a Reportable and Communicable Disease under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* (HPPA). I am soliciting your cooperation as community physicians, local hospital infection control personnel, and other medical practitioners to expedite the reporting of WNV illness to your local medical officer of health.

There have been two substantive changes to the WNV case definitions for 2005. The old category of West Nile Virus Fever (WNF) has been re-named West Nile Virus Non-Neurological Syndrome (WN Non-NS). The second change is the expansion of the West Nile Virus Neurological Syndrome clinical criteria to include: movement disorders, Parkinsonism and similar conditions, rhabdomyolysis and other neurological syndromes contained in the note below the criteria.

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To secure the continued safety of the blood supply, Regulation 338/96 permits the disclosure of a patient's name and other information to the Canadian Blood Services (CBS) if a physician reasonably suspects that the patient has received a blood transfusion or a blood product from CBS, or has donated blood to CBS and may be infected with WNV. It would be helpful if, at the time you report a case of WNV to your local medical officer of health, that you provide information about the patient's donation or recipient history. The medical officer of health will then make the appropriate report to CBS.

The enclosed document pertaining to WNV Illness surveillance and reporting is provided for your information and action.

Further information on WNV is available for the general public at 1-877-234-4343 TTY 1-800-387-5559 or the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care web-site at: http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/program/pubhealth/westnile/wnv_mn.html. Information can also be obtained through your local health unit.

Thank you for your consideration. Together we can protect the public and reduce the risks associated with WNV.

Yours truly,



Dr. Sheela V. Basrur
Chief Medical Officer of Health and
Assistant Deputy Minister

Encl.