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Op/Ed Submission

Get your bubble vaccinated

By Susan Brown, President and CEO, Interior Health

Right across Canada, more than ever, we need people of all ages and walks of life to get vaccinated against influenza.

The more we reduce the presence of respiratory illness this winter, the better positioned we are to continue fighting against COVID-19.

When we assess a patient's respiratory symptoms, our job is easier if they have had the flu shot because it helps us determine if the illness is more likely influenza or COVID-19.

So far, Interior Health has been fortunate that our health-care system has kept up to the demands of COVID-19. But I can share with you, we are seeing challenges in some places, such as testing sites and labs, and we have entered a fragile time with the cooler weather. We need to avoid the influx of really sick patients with influenza, which, combined with COVID-19 pressures, could push our health-care system to the edge.

I know from more than 30 years of experience in health care that getting the flu shot helps prevent the system from surging over capacity.

If you are under 40, you may think influenza and COVID-19 are nothing to fear, but we need everybody to think of others during this difficult time. While the symptoms for you may be mild, as with COVID-19, you could unknowingly pass the flu to loved ones and it can be fatal.

Our seniors and elders have been there for all of us and they need our support today. I can't think of a better way to show appreciation than by taking advantage of any defence that will protect their health when they need us the most.

The flu shot is a tool in the tool box. The choice is yours to decide whether to use the tools to protect yourself and the ones you love.

Over the next few weeks, you will hear more about Interior Health's public campaign to encourage vaccination. We will be working with many different providers to promote our influenza campaign this year.

The flu season typically ramps up in November, but before it reaches our communities, talk to your bubble, your neighbours' bubble, and your social media bubble. Encourage everyone to get their bubble vaccinated.

Even if you have never felt the need to get the flu shot before, please do it this year. Help protect each other and the health-care system we all need.



