

Care, Comfort and Hope

Wisconsin Hospitals Community Benefits

Existing, Emerging and Re-emerging Communicable Diseases

Hospitals are well aware of the critical role they have in protecting public health. They have been deeply involved in working with public health agencies to develop protocols and responses to pandemic flu outbreaks, many of which were put to the test last fall and throughout the winter as H1N1 posed a serious threat to the health of Wisconsin's communities.

Strong relationships with area health care providers extends vaccination efforts

Being the only hospital in Burnett County, it was apparent early on in the H1N1 situation that Burnett Medical Center felt an obligation to protect residents in the surrounding communities from the spread of this potentially dangerous

virus. Fortunately, the Burnett County Public Health Department has established phenomenal relationships with area health care providers and had developed efficient plans for mass vaccination. When the Health Department was able to order and receive vaccine before private health care agencies, they were true to CDC's recommendations and provided vaccine to as many health care workers in the county as possible. This transfer of vaccine allowed Burnett Medical Center to protect its health care workforce.

As soon as Burnett Medical Center was able to submit an order for its own vaccine supply, they did. This supply was used to begin vaccination of the at-risk groups designated as priority one. All patients meeting the ever-changing CDC criteria presenting to Burnett Medical Center were vaccinated on-site.

Through its strong relationship with Burnett County Public Health, Burnett Medical Center was able to extend its vaccination efforts, and three staff members were able to partner in mass vaccination clinics in area schools. The hospital shared not only staffing resources, but vaccine resources, as well. The hospital and

the Public Health Department were able to work together to best utilize vaccine that outdated rapidly and re-allocate vaccine according to the age groups that were demanding the most according to the changing situation.

The result of the combined efforts in Burnett County was that vaccination clinics conducted by Public Health administered 1,902 doses of H1N1 vaccine. The County, as a whole, achieved approximately the national immunization rate of 20 percent.

Burnett Medical Center, Grantsburg

A success story...

The events surrounding the H1N1 pandemic can be retold as a success story for a small rural area that worked together to best serve their community. This was achieved through exceptional communication and teamwork with the local health care agencies.

In preparation for the pandemic, Black River Memorial Hospital (BRMH), in conjunction with Jackson County Public Health, provided free educational seminars at the hospital for area businesses, long-term care facilities, day care centers and the public to help them plan for a H1N1 pandemic. H1N1 discharge instructions were developed so that the Krohn

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Clinic, Ho-Chunk Health Care Clinic, Jackson County Public Health and BRMH would provide patients with the same information.

During the H1N1 outbreak in our community:

- Press conferences were held at Black River Memorial Hospital with representatives from the local health care facilities.
- BRMH provided hospital staff to assist at the mass vaccination clinics provided by Public Health.
- Halloween treat bags were sent to the local daycares since the children were unable to trick or treat at the hospital.
- BRMH's Business Health department shared communications, promoted proper prevention, and went onsite to area businesses to administer the H1N1 and seasonal influenza vaccinations.

BRMH would not be able to consider this time a success if it wasn't for the teamwork and collaboration from our community.

Black River Memorial Hospital, Black River Falls



Children's Flu Fighters to the rescue!

Like the rest of the nation, Wisconsin was hit in spring 2009 by an unexpected virus, H1N1 (Swine) flu. Schools and workplaces were faced with decisions about shutting down and community organizations came together to collaborate on prevention tactics.

The summer brought relief from the virus risk, but health officials knew that come fall, not only would H1N1 return, but the regular flu season as well.

That is when Children's Hospital and Health System got proactive. At the beginning of the fall flu season, they launched "Children's Flu Fighters," a hygiene campaign aimed at kids. The campaign used key messages communicated through cartoons to encourage children and their caregivers to use effective techniques to minimize the spread of flu.

Flu Fighters was promoted statewide and distributed through outlets the health system had access to, including outpatient clinics, the Emergency

Department/Trauma Center, Children's Health Education Center, Children's Service Society of Wisconsin, primary care physicians and school-based nurses in Milwaukee schools.

Missy Clean, Captain Cough, Super Sneeze and R&R Kid helped spread messages throughout the state about proper hand washing, coughing and sneezing into a sleeve and staying home when ill. The super heroes distributed packets that included hand sanitizer, stickers, posters, clings and other educational materials to help reduce the spread of germs.

A Web site, ChildrensFluFighters.com, helped deliver these same messages. During the height of flu season, there were blog posts twice weekly to keep caregivers up-to-date on H1N1 information and hygiene tips. For the younger audience, there were games that reinforced the hygiene messages.

Throughout the state, more than 2,300 individuals signed up for updates from the Web site. The message of flu prevention, detection and general wellness was sent statewide to teachers, coaches, school nurses, daycare providers, parents and other caregivers. More than 4,900 Flu Fighter kits were distributed throughout the state.

Children's Hospital and Health System, Milwaukee

Bellin Health's (free) response to the 2009-10 H1N1 outbreak

The following is a basic account of some of the free measures Bellin Health System in Green Bay took to help Northeast Wisconsin address the 2009-10 H1N1 outbreak.

Bellin Health took a proactive approach in its efforts to help minimize the effects of the 2009-10 H1N1 virus outbreak.

The health system immediately organized a dedicated internal H1N1 advisory team charged with formulating policies and strategic planning that would largely affect patients and their families, staff members, vendors and others who regularly interact at Bellin Health facilities.

The H1N1 advisory team offered a number of tactics designed to combat the spread of H1N1 while also offering the public free, reliable, up-to-date information on the infection. One of the key tactics this group emphasized was the distribution of reliable and easily accessible information.

The team determined that the best course of action for sharing accurate and timely information with patients and their families, the general public and members of the local media was to create and promote a free website.

The site, www.bellinflufacts.org, was quickly created by Bellin Health's marketing and communications department with direct input from the H1N1 advisory team. The site contained pertinent information about H1N1 and was regularly updated and populated. It offered vaccination clinic dates and locations and updated information regarding eligibility for vaccination against the disease.

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The website linked to reliable information from agencies like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the State Department of Health, www.211.org, www.flu.gov, and the World Health Organization. This free information was also available in Spanish on the same website.

The bellinflufacts website also heavily utilized social media. Readers could easily share reliable, up-to-date H1N1 information via Twitter, Facebook or an additional 293 social media sites or they could sign up on the home page for an RSS feed.

Creating the website was a successful strategy in Bellin Health's approach to helping the public combat the 2009-10 H1N1 virus outbreak. The website project relied on the health system's ability to quickly and effectively pool together resources for the greater health of the surrounding communities.

Given the experience of H1N1 2009-10, the H1N1 advisory team and www.bellinflufacts.org are well-prepared for the next potential H1N1 outbreak.

Bellin Health, Green Bay



Business H1N1 program a success

St. Joseph's Hospital and the Chippewa Falls Area Chamber of Commerce sponsored an H1N1 presentation for area businesses Nov. 12 at the Heyde Center for the Arts. Eight Chippewa businesses registered for the event, and a few more people attended.

Rhonda Brown, Healthy Communities Specialist at St. Joseph's Hospital and coordinator of Chippewa Health Improvement Partnership, facilitated the discussion, and Kim Entenmann, director of People Services, shared various ideas and plans with other attendees.

St. Joseph's Hospital, Chippewa Falls

Edgerton Hospital Hits the Air to Inform the Public of H1N1

In February, the H1N1 virus had slowed a bit, but there was no telling when it would re-emerge. And, experts were predicting that we would definitely be seeing the H1N1 pandemic again. So, Edgerton Hospital's Infection Control Coordinator, Cheryl Matzinger, hit the air via 1670 AM WTDY. Cheryl talked in informatively regarding precautionary measures, the need for vaccinations, when to seek medical assistance and when to wait it out. The goal was to use a mass medium to reach a large target audience, with an increased frequency. This educational broadcast was aired consistently throughout the day. We were pleased to help spread this important message and to act as a resource for our communities.

Edgerton Hospital, Edgerton

Preparing for the potential H1N1 epidemic

Ministry Howard Young Health Care developed an H1N1 Planning Committee that met weekly to discuss and take proactive steps to prepare for the potential H1N1 epidemic. A group of approximately 20 staff members from various departments developed strategies specific to care for a large influx of H1N1 patients. These strategies were tested in a mock drill on October 27, 2010, at both Ministry Eagle River Memorial Hospital and Howard Young Medical Center.

Ministry Saint Mary's Hospital Infection Control Supervisor also participated in a regional H1N1 forum on a local public radio station that also included panelists from the Oneida County Health Department, Rhinelander School District, and Nicolet Area Technical College to discuss the impacts the flu might have and how to limit its spread. All staff and hospital volunteers had the vaccine made available to them at no charge.

Ministry Health Care's Howard Young Health Care, Woodruff

Hospital hosted H1N1 prevention & preparedness community forum

Sacred Heart Hospital hosted an H1N1 community forum last fall on prevention and preparedness. Local experts provided an overview of the projected community impact and preparedness from the perspective of the state, county, ethical, and health care provider viewpoint. They also shared guidelines and recommendations. Attendees received personal checklists and information resources.

Sacred Heart Hospital, Eau Claire

River Falls Area Hospital helps lead local H1N1 response

While the H1N1 flu pandemic did not reach the epidemic levels feared by many, local preparations helped ensure that our region was ready to deal with whatever health emergencies might come our way.

A health care team at River Falls Area Hospital worked with community partners to convene a regional H1N1 preparedness coalition and prepare a comprehensive response plan. The coalition consisted of representatives from the

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public health department, schools, county and city government, emergency medical services and River Falls Medical Clinic (RFMC).

In addition, the hospital held vaccine clinics for health care personnel throughout the region, providing the vaccine to all health care workers free of charge.

“Our goal was to ensure that the health care providers stayed healthy so they could provide care to patients,” said Jennifer Loesch, RN, quality manager and River Falls Area Hospital.

River Falls Area Hospital, River Falls

H1N1 efforts

Reedsburg Area Medical Center is proud of the community support they were able to lend during a somewhat scary time for the public. The director of surgery coordinated the administering of H1N1 vaccines to the public, as well as their own RN's volunteering their time to administer the vaccines. Infection control and patient safety staff visited area churches and leadership groups to keep the community up to date on happenings. The employee health nurse fit tested and trained the Reedsburg Ambulance Department to perform respirator fit testing, and also fit tested and trained senior life center staff to perform fit testing. ER staff notified all patients of their negative H1N1 test results (traditionally only positive test results are called to patients) to give them peace of mind. Hand gel, masks and pocket tissue were available, free of charge to all of our visitors. Reedsburg Area Medical Center provided all of the local schools with informational speakers, hand gel and educational handouts that were sent home with students. Pharmacist Cindy Kissack also wrote for and received a grant to provide education to the public.

Reedsburg Area Medical Center is very pleased with the tremendous efforts put forth by all of their staff to keep its community safe and healthy during the H1N1 outbreak.

Reedsburg Area Medical Center, Reedsburg

How Aurora Health Care helped communities during the H1N1 period

The Aurora Visiting Nurse Association staffed 66 clinics to administer the H1N1 vaccine throughout Milwaukee and Oshkosh, October 2009 through March 2010. (The cities' health departments covered the staff's salaries.)

Aurora's supply of the vaccine was distributed to our hospitals and medical offices for our patients as well as to employee health departments for our caregivers.

Business Journal of Milwaukee and Aurora Health Care partner together

A public service partnership between the Business Journal of Milwaukee and Aurora Health Care focused on what local businesses could do to prepare for H1N1. An ad ran for three weeks last October and November in the local Business Journal, which drove readers to both Web sites to view an informational video featuring Aurora's Dr. Bruce Van Cleave.

An H1N1 fact sheet and the Department of Homeland Security's business/flu guide, also on the two Web sites, were made available to businesses to distribute to their employees.

Aurora Health Care, Milwaukee

Submit community benefit stories to Mary Kay Grasmick, editor, at mgrasmick@wha.org.



Read more about hospitals connecting with their communities at www.WiServePoint.org.