



## SARS Provincial Operations Centre

April 13, 2003

### **IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS REGARDING THE DIAGNOSIS OF SARS**

Attached please find an **Urgent Message** from the Toronto Public Health regarding a new cluster of SARS cases.

We are providing you with this information because identifying SARS patients has been and will continue to be a diagnostic challenge for Health Care Professionals. The difficulty in making the diagnosis has been that many symptoms of SARS are similar to other common diseases. Therefore the link to known cases has been essential in making the diagnosis, however the diagnosis of SARS must now be considered even if the clinical picture alone is present.

Patients currently under quarantine are at high risk for developing SARS. Health Care Professionals must consider all patients who are under quarantine and have SARS-like symptoms, as SARS patients (under investigation, suspect or probable). Public Health should be contacted about these individuals and they should be admitted to hospital. If there is any doubt about the diagnosis contact the physician on call for the Provincial Operation Centre (Tel: 416 314-1768). If you call the Provincial Operations Centre, you will be asked a series of questions about your patient (see attached form).

Your continued careful questioning of patients for potential contacts is extremely important, especially in the current setting where patients may be reluctant to divulge information about direct contacts. In order for Health Care Professionals to be aware of individuals under quarantine, Public Health has, and will continue to give these people explicit advice to inform Health Care Professionals that they are “under quarantine” by Public Health should they present for a medical evaluation.

Health Care Professionals should routinely ask all patients if they are “under quarantine”, or if “Public Health has contacted them and asked them to be on home isolation”. With all of our continued vigilance we can better manage this evolving disease.

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