

# Pandemic could use nursing help

BY GLORIA FINGAS, THE LEADER-POST NOVEMBER 14, 2009

I was disappointed to read in the Oct. 7 article "Nurses shifted to battle flu threat,

" that the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region did not plan to utilize its licensed practical nurses to provide H1N1 immunizations, but would use part-time, casual and retired registered nurses and psychiatric nurses to fill the 63 additional full-time positions needed to staff the H1N1 immunization clinics. A region official was quoted as saying, "they (LPNs) can potentially be immunizers . . . only for people who are over five years of age and only under the direction of a registered nurse."

Not entirely true. The LPN Act, which was passed into legislation in 2000, gave LPNs the authority to care for their own clients without the direction of a registered nurse. It is disappointing to see that despite this years-old legislation, the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region still appears to harbour old prejudices about what LPNs can and cannot do.

It is within the scope of practice of the LPN with additional education in immunizations to administer immunizations to clients over the age of five. This additional education is the identical six hour training the region had to give its RNs and RPNs before they were allowed to give H1N1 immunizations.

The contribution of LPNs to this undertaking may have eliminated the necessity and cost of rehiring and relicensing retired RNs so that they could do H1N1 immunizations. It would have been an important training and work opportunity for those LPNs who were willing and able to assist in the mass H1N1 immunization. It would have also been a significantly more efficient use of the Region's limited resources.

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