

START UP

January 2009

Welcome to START UP

A newsletter to update you on new developments as we build Ontario's first public health agency. For additional background information, we invite you to visit our web site at www.oahpp.ca.

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MESSAGE FROM VIVEK GOEL, PRESIDENT AND CEO



VIVEK GOEL

As we enter 2009, we have several exciting developments to share with you. In mid-December the Board approved our first *Strategic Planning Framework and Start-Up Operational Plan*. This document reflects the beginning of what will become over time, an iterative and consultative approach to the setting of our priorities. Over the next few months, we will be undertaking a consultation process that will include town hall meetings across the province and a web-based survey. We encourage you to submit any

comments you have on the framework directly to stratplan@oahpp.ca. Your feedback is important to our success and we hope that you will get involved. In conjunction with the consultation process, the Board's newly-created Strategic Planning Sub-Committee, chaired by Dr. Liana Nolan, will develop a comprehensive three-year plan that we will unveil later this year.

As I mentioned in my last communiqué, the Ontario Public Health Laboratories transferred to the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (OAHPP) on December 15, 2008, greatly strengthening our ability to provide specialized scientific and technical advice and support across the province. In this issue of Start Up, we introduce you to the Scientific Medical Team at the labs and highlight some of the work that is underway. The OAHPP's laboratory science and medical team is headed up by Dr. Don Low, Medical Director and Pat Everitt, Chief Laboratory Operations Officer. It is a great pleasure to also announce that Dr. Brian Schwartz has joined OAHPP as our Director of Emergency Management Support. In this role Dr. Schwartz will be responsible for establishing the protocols, policies and relationships needed to prepare for and effectively support the Government and its partners in responding to emergencies and other exigent situations.

I invite you to find out more about the *Strategic Planning Framework and Start Up Operational Plan* and other recent developments.

STRATEGIC PLANNING FRAMEWORK AND START-UP OPERATIONAL PLAN

In creating our first framework and plan, we have benefited greatly from the prior work of the Capacity Review Committee, the Agency Implementation Task Force, the reviews undertaken of the Ontario Public Health Laboratory system and discussions with many individuals and groups.

Our vision is to become an internationally-recognized centre of excellence that applies and advances knowledge to protect and promote the health of Ontario's population. Between this ambitious vision for the future and where we are now are multiple intermediate steps and critical projects in a range of areas. The formal strategic planning process will help us identify and choose priorities and your input and feedback will be critical.

- The first part of this document lays out the framework for developing our long-term goals and objectives.
- The second part speaks to the work that needs to be done to finish building the operational structures, policies and processes required for any organization to effectively function and execute its mandate.

Our focus is on getting to a state of operational readiness, building partnerships and engaging in a consultative multi-year planning process, while at the same time advancing public health priorities.

In the next few months we will be consulting with our stakeholders across the province through town halls and a web-based survey and we will look at other means to generate involvement. We will update you on the consultation process as we move forward. In the meantime, please feel free to email your comments to stratplan@oahpp.ca



SHEELA BASRUR CENTRE OUTREACH PROGRAM GENERATES GREAT SUPPORT

More than 300 friends, family, colleagues and sponsors gathered at The Carlu on November 27 for a reception and launch of the Sheela Basrur Centre Outreach Program – a program designed to invigorate the renewal of public health in Ontario. For more information, please visit the web site at www.sheelabasrurcentre.ca

Special thanks to our Celebration and Tribute sponsors (Courtyard Group, Emergis Telus, Strata Health, Xwave and Knightsbridge) as well as the many donors and ticket purchasers who made the evening a success, raising more than \$400,000 in support of the Sheela Basrur Centre. We would like to recognize the founding partners of the Sheela Basrur Centre: Roche, Sanofi Pasteur, Merck Frosst and Shoppers Drug Mart for their generous support and involvement in the launch of the Centre's Outreach Program. Efforts to build the programs are now underway and we look forward to sharing new developments with you in 2009.

REVITALIZING THE PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORIES

The transfer of the Ontario Public Health Laboratories to the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion marks an historic milestone in the revitalization of public health in this province. It is fortunate that under the leadership of Dr. Don Low, considerable renewal of the public health laboratories is already underway. Don, who was appointed Medical Director of the Ontario Public Health Laboratories in 2005, has been instrumental in the acquisition of new equipment, the implementation of a new Laboratory Information System and recruitment of new medical microbiologists and scientists from around the world.

As a result, public health laboratories are being revitalized across the province, enhancing capabilities in a number of critical areas, including:

- Molecular diagnostic testing for respiratory viruses, including influenza and whooping cough
- Antibiotic resistance in hospital super bugs
- Rapid DNA-based tests for Norovirus
- The diagnosis and management of *C. difficile*
- Diagnosis of drug-resistant malaria in return travellers
- New approaches to test for systemic fungal disease
- The pathogenesis and epidemiology of legionnaires
- Drug resistance in pneumococci
- Molecular testing for tuberculosis

We'll profile this exciting work in upcoming issues of Start Up, but in the meantime, we are pleased to introduce you to the medical/scientific team at the public health labs.



DR. DON LOW

Dr. Don Low is the Medical Director of the Public Health Laboratories and Head of the Department of Microbiology at the University Health Network and Mount Sinai Hospital. He is a Professor at the University of Toronto in the Department of Laboratory Medicine and Pathobiology and Department of Medicine.

Don is a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. He is also a Fellow of the American Academy of Microbiology and member of the Association of American Physicians.

Don's primary research interests are in the study of the epidemiology and the mechanisms of antimicrobial resistance in community and their clinical relevance. A recognized authority in microbiology and infectious diseases, Don has published more than 300 papers in peer-reviewed journals.

THE PUBLIC HEALTH LAB MEDICAL/SCIENTIFIC TEAM

Dr. Steve Drews
Dr. David John Farrell
Dr. David Fisman
Dr. Vanessa Gray Allen
Dr. Jonathan Gubbay
Dr. Cyril Guyard

Dr. Frances Jamieson
Dr. Roberto Melano
Dr. Dylan Pillai
Dr. Anu Rebbapragada
Dr. Sean Zhang

MEET THE PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORIES MEDICAL/SCIENTIFIC TEAM

Dr. Steve Drews is a clinical microbiologist with specialized expertise in molecular diagnostics. He also has extensive experience in the advanced diagnosis of respiratory infections including influenza and tuberculosis. He has a PhD from British Columbia and is board-certified to be a director of medical microbiology laboratories in the United States and Canada.

Dr. David John Farrell is a clinical microbiologist with expertise and research interests in the surveillance and epidemiology of antimicrobial resistance. He completed his undergraduate and Master's degrees in medical science, and PhD in Australia. He has been working in London (UK) for the past eight years directing global surveillance studies, developing new antimicrobial compounds, and researching new mechanisms of antimicrobial resistance. Prior to this he directed a large clinical microbiology laboratory in Australia.

Dr. David Fisman is an infectious diseases physician and epidemiologist who is cross-appointed at the OAHPP and the Hospital for Sick Children. His interests include the epidemiology of emerging infections and sexually transmitted infections, and public health policy and decision making related to communicable disease control. He was previously an Associate Medical Officer of Health for the City of Hamilton, and has also served as a Fellow in Health Policy at Harvard Center for Risk Analysis.

Dr. Vanessa Gray Allen is a medical microbiologist and infectious disease specialist with clinical and research expertise in sexually transmitted infections and environmental microbiology. She completed her MD at McGill University and her residency in internal medicine, infectious diseases and microbiology at the University of Toronto. Currently she is completing her Masters of Public Health at Johns Hopkins University. At the OAHPP, Vanessa leads the bacterial sexually transmitted infections and environmental laboratories, as well as oversight of the educational and quality assurance programs at the Public Health Laboratories.

Dr. Jonathan Gubbay is a medical microbiologist and pediatric infectious diseases physician with broad expertise in infectious diseases, particularly as it relates to the etiology of respiratory infections. He completed his MD and training in paediatric infectious diseases in Australia, followed by medical microbiology training in Canada.

Dr. Cyril Guyard completed his undergraduate degree and MSc. in molecular and cellular biology and PhD in France. In 2006, Dr. Guyard joined the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care as a senior scientist molecular microbiologist and is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Laboratory Medicine and Pathobiology, Faculty of Medicine at the University of Toronto. His research includes pathogenesis and epidemiology of Legionnaire diseases.

Dr. Frances Jamieson received her MD from the University of Toronto, and is a medical microbiologist with special expertise and research interests in tuberculosis (TB) and mycobacteriology, molecular surveillance of pathogens of public health importance, and public health policy. Dr Jamieson has been with the Ontario Public Health Laboratories (OPHL) since 1996. Prior to joining the OPHL, Dr. Jamieson was a staff medical microbiologist with the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, and a Federal Field Epidemiologist with Health Canada.

Dr. Roberto Melano is a scientific expert in the mechanisms of antimicrobial resistance. He completed his MSc in molecular microbiology and his PhD in microbiology at the University of Buenos Aires, Argentina, and his post doctoral training at the Queen Elizabeth II Hospital in Halifax. His lab in the Public Health Laboratory is involved in the detection and characterization of resistance to different antibiotic families in both Gram-negative and -positive pathogens. Elucidation of genetic platforms (e.g. conjugative plasmids, transposons and integrons) and enzymatic activity are part of that molecular characterization.

THE PUBLIC HEALTH LAB MEDICAL/SCIENTIFIC TEAM ...continued

Dr. Dylan Pillai is a clinician and scientist with expertise in the molecular, cellular, and computational biology of emerging infectious diseases. He completed his MD and PhD degrees at the University of Toronto and completed post-doctoral training at Stanford and University of California San Francisco. His research interests include *Clostridium difficile* pathogenesis and mechanisms of drug resistance in *Streptococcus pneumoniae* and *Plasmodium falciparum*.

Dr. Anu Rebbapragada is a molecular specialist at the Public Health Laboratory of the OAHPP. Her work includes validating protocols to monitor Human Papilloma Virus vaccine efficacy, building a lab-based surveillance network for sexually transmitted infections, and developing molecular technologies for rapid screening of emerging antibiotic resistance mechanisms in *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*. Her broad research training includes microbial molecular genetics, cancer signal transduction, immunology and clinical epidemiology of STI/HIV in Africa.

Dr. Sean Zhang is a clinical microbiologist and research scientist with expertise in medical mycology, antimicrobial resistance in bacteria and fungi, and microbial immunology. He completed his MD in Shanghai, China and his PhD in microbiology and immunology in Finland. He did postdoctoral research in microbial immunology and fellowship in clinical microbiology at the University of Toronto with additional trainings in molecular diagnostic assays and medical mycology at Mayo Clinic, the Fungus Testing Laboratory and CDC. He is an Assistant Professor at the University of Toronto.

INTRODUCING THE STRATEGIC PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD

At the end of December, the Board of Directors of the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (OAHPP) created the Strategic Planning Sub-Committee, which is comprised of both Board members and members-at-large. The sub-committee is responsible for providing advice to the Board on the content and priorities of the rolling three-year strategic plan for the OAHPP.

While the committee is advisory to the Board, it will play a key role in bringing together priority areas of activity identified or proposed by partner ministries. In conjunction with the consultation around the Strategic Planning Framework and Start-Up Operational Plan, it will review and revise the framework to lay the basis for a comprehensive three-year plan to be released later this year.

FOLLOWING A CALL FOR NOMINATIONS, THE BOARD IS PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE:

Dr. Liane Nolan, Chair
OAHPP Board member,
Commissioner and Medical
Officer of Health for the
Region of Waterloo

Gail Bursey
Director of Chronic Disease
and Injury Prevention
Division, Peel Public Health

Cathy Egan
Regional Infection Control
Network Coordinator,
Waterloo Wellington Control
Network

Dr. Vivek Goel
President and CEO, OAHPP

Dr. Richard Massé
OAHPP Board member,
President and CEO of the
Institut national de santé
publique du Québec
(INSPQ)

Dr. Alan Meek
OAHPP Board member,
former Dean of the Ontario
Veterinary College,
University of Guelph, and
member, Advisory Board for
the Canadian Veterinary
Reserve

Alan Shepard
Provost and Vice President
Academic, Ryerson
University

Dr. David Williams
Acting Chief Medical Officer
of Health

Ron Yamada
OAHPP Board member,
Executive in Residence for
Health and Life Science
Sector Strategy at the
Joseph L. Rotman School of
Management at the
University of Toronto, and
member of Cancer Care
Ontario's Performance,
Planning and Research
Committee