

# Preparing for the H1N1 pandemic: a formidable foe

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Prevention of H1N1 influenza virus through vaccination must be our top priority if disease patterns in the northern hemisphere follow those in the southern hemisphere this fall, writes Paul Hébert, Editor-in-Chief of *CMAJ (Canadian Medical Association Journal)* in an editorial.

However, Canada and many other Western countries lack experience in mass immunization campaigns. In fact, we have been below vaccination target levels in such outbreaks as the resurgence of mumps in young adults in Canada last year. We need to plan now on how to overcome these problems.

In Canada, leadership is needed to ensure access to vaccines and to the expertise and equipment to help deal with this [pandemic](#). We need a national champion who has proper powers across all jurisdictions and accountability to the highest office in the country. Next, we need local leaders and other champions who will collaborate and cooperate to ensure rapid response.

"In countries such as Canada that have shared responsibilities between many levels of government, collaboration and clear communication are essential as a first line of defence," write Dr. Hébert and the *CMAJ* editorial writing team. "To see that this happens, governments need to have or enact laws to provide the necessary power to ensure rapid action on complex issues."

If disease patterns in the northern hemisphere follow those in the

southern hemisphere, Europe and North America will most likely experience a second wave of [H1N1](#) cases this fall and our resources could be overwhelmed. In most areas, planning has not yet included how to secure experienced health care professionals to deliver technologies to help patients survive.

"This is not a time for complacency. The health czar and other national leaders should immediately convene a summit to link public health officials, the critical care community, first responders, and other health care providers, decision-makers, community planners and the public, to communicate next steps and to ensure that actions taken by leaders will work at the ground level," concludes the editorial.

More information: <http://www.cmaj.ca/press/cmaj091426.pdf>

Source: Canadian Medical Association Journal ([news](#) : [web](#))

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