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Infection at Shelburne Residence is ?not pneumonia?

Heidi Vanderhorst, General Manager of Shelburne Residence Retirement Living and Long Term Care, has responded to a citizen complaint to the Free Press this week, by assuring the public that an outbreak of respiratory illness at the home that began April 6 ?is not pneumonia.?

A number of residents have been affected, she says, ?experiencing a range of symptoms such as: runny nose, congestion, headache, sore throat, muscle aches, tiredness and, dry and productive cough.?

?Because our residents are frequently of fragile health, unfortunately sometimes it does occur that a frail resident will develop pneumonia,? says Ms. Vanderhorst.

Per standard procedure, Ms. Vanderhorst says, ?the appropriate authorities including the MOHLTC (Ministry of Health and Long Term Care) and Public Health were immediately alerted and additional monitoring, care and routine practices, and additional contact and droplet precautions were put in place.?

?Since then, Public Health has been working with Shelburne Residence monitoring progress and we have been routinely in contact with them on almost a daily basis.?

Richard Sullivan, Corporate Manager of Marketing and Public Relations of People Live Here Homes, which runs the facility, told the Free Press that ?a total of 26 residents out of 52 were placed on an active list for exhibiting symptoms.? As of April 26, only four residents remain on the active list, ?the others have had symptoms resolved and are out and about.?

The Residence had ?an infection control protocol and followed it at all times, and we have actively communicated with residents and family about the situation,? says Mr. Sullivan.

However, he added, ?there have been two deaths during this time.

?Both exhibited symptoms,? he said. ?No further deaths have occurred, and the number of new residents showing signs of symptoms has slowed. The residents that are on the active list, who are showing symptoms, remain in their rooms.

?We are open to the public. If the families want to come, we provide them with gloves and protective apparel.?

Ms. Vanderhorst added: ?It is not uncommon for long-term care homes to experience one or more outbreaks over the winter, as occurred at a number of other local homes. Residents are also at risk because they are often already medically compromised and many viral and bacterial respiratory pathogens are easily transmitted in an institutional environment.?

?Shelburne Residence had zero outbreaks this winter,? she said. ?This is our first since last year, which is a testament to the hard work of our staff and their diligence in infection control.?

By Marni Walsh