

The University of Alberta / Lister Hall

The University of Alberta's University Health Centre (UHC) began piloting the Residence Wellness Alert® in August 2014 and has been very pleased with the results.

The decision to implement the system came out of recognition that residence disease outbreaks were impacting the academics and health of our students as well as costing the university significant human and financial resources to combat. As an example, a 2010 outbreak of noro-like symptoms in the university's Lister Centre residence resulted in **198** students becoming ill before the outbreak was mitigated. The direct and indirect costs of that one event totaled more than \$11,000 in staff resources and supplies. That does not take into account intangible costs such as the effect on student academic performance or the institution's reputation. Although such outbreaks are rare, we know that they can and do occur.

Since starting the Wellness Alert pilot this past summer, the centre has identified two separate occurrences of noro-like symptoms on separate floors of residence before the disease could spread further. The UHC also identified a third potential outbreak of flu-like symptoms that would have previously gone unnoticed while significantly impacting the health of the community. Thanks to Wellness Alert, the UHC was readily able to respond to these potential outbreaks and work with Residence Services to implement targeted interventions designed to eliminate the disease.



The UHC has also valued Wellness Alert's reporting tools. Thanks to the system, the UHC can now generate real-time reports that assist in monitoring residence health and making informed planning decisions regarding resources and emergency response initiatives. They have also allowed the UHC to target hygiene sessions and health education presentations for those floors with highest propensities for illness. The system allows the UHC to generate reports on specific types of illness, create Epi-curves and enhance those curves with graphical representations of the interventions introduced during potential outbreaks to track their effectiveness.

The UHC has already seen benefits in rolling out the system and the UHC excited about possible deployment of the tool for use in other communal residences at the University of Alberta.

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