COVID-19 Daily Update for AHS Medical Staff

This COVID-19 update is intended to provide a daily summary of the key action items, information and decisions for AHS Medical Staff. It is forwarded to physicians’ preferred email inbox.

Please review these updates regularly as the COVID-19 pandemic response continues to evolve.

Updates for April 21, 2020:

We have identified 187 new cases over the past 24 hours for a total of 3,095 confirmed cases in Alberta.

1,273 people have recovered.

There have been two new deaths over the last 24 hours, bringing Alberta’s total to 61.

See the latest COVID-19 update from Alberta Health’s Chief Medical Officer of Health. Graphics showing growth in Alberta cases and global cases are also available.

Message from the AHS Board
Staff and physicians at Alberta Health Services are once again demonstrating extraordinary effort, dedication and resiliency — this time in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We want all of you to know that members of the AHS Board join Albertans from across the province to thank you for your hard work and effort.

As you likely know, AHS/Alberta Health modelling projections show the province is still a few weeks away from reaching peak demand on the health system. This means pressures on the health system — and on all of you — will increase throughout April and early May. This will be a difficult time — for all of us in the health system, especially our heroes on the front lines, and for all Albertans. Excellent planning and preparation have put AHS in a good position to deal with the expected surge in patients. We have increased our acute care capacity, our ICU capacity and our number of ventilators. We have sufficient supplies of personal protective equipment to keep our front-line workers safe. We’ve provided support to continuing care facilities to help protect the vulnerable populations who live there. And the number of COVID-19 tests we’re completing is helping us monitor the spread of the virus and develop strategies for containment.
Our planning, our preparation and our ongoing support of our patients and partners have been made possible through your coordinated efforts within our integrated, provinewide health system. Members of the AHS Board have always been proud of your achievements; we are humbled by all you are doing now for Albertans and for each other.

On behalf of the AHS Board: Thank you. Be safe. Be well.

**What you need to know**

**NEW – Upcoming Webinar: COVID-19 in Continuing Care** – Edmonton Zone physicians and Nurse Practitioners active in Long Term Care and Designated Supportive Living facilities are invited to a webinar on April 23 from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. The session will focus on learnings from outbreaks in Calgary Zone Continuing Care facilities. Long-Term Care Medical Leaders in Calgary will describe their initial experiences and learnings as COVID-19 has heavily impacted continuing care in Calgary. Click the link to participate and enter meeting ID: 999 1708 3893 and the password 373724.

**NEW – Guidance on testing asymptomatic patients for COVID-19** – Our understanding of COVID-19 and best practices with regard to patient care continues to evolve. We would like to clarify that it is not necessary to perform COVID testing in an asymptomatic patient before providing routine, urgent, or emergent health services, or before accepting a patient being transferred from another site.

The following outlines the rationale behind this guidance:

1. Prevalence of COVID-19 in the general asymptomatic patient is relatively low.
2. If testing were provided, the burden of virus may be below the detectable threshold at the time of collection but increase above the detectable threshold when the health service is provided which could lead to a false negative. This false negative could lead to less adherence to precautions and proper use of PPE in the event that symptoms develop.
3. Delaying health services while awaiting a swab result may result in unnecessary morbidity or mortality, without adding value to the decision making process.

This approach ensures patients receive the care they need when they need it. For more information, please visit ahs.ca/covid

**Question of the Day** – “How can community specialists order Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)?”

**NEW – PPE Distribution to Community Physicians** – Alberta Health Services (AHS) is coordinating allocation of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) during the COVID-19 pandemic. A revised process is now in place for distribution of PPE to specialist physicians working in community (non-AHS) settings.

PPE distribution processes to the following groups has NOT changed and will continue as per usual:

- PCN primary care physicians
- Non-PCN primary care physicians
- Pediatricians
- Obstetricians and gynecologists
Physicians working in AHS or contracted facilities who have questions regarding the PPE ordering process should contact their local CPSM Site Services Supervisor.

Do you have COVID-19 questions or information you would like to see covered in an upcoming edition of the COVID-19 CMO update? Let us know at CMO@ahs.ca.

Clinical Policies and Practices

- **NEW** – Clinical Guidance: Use of Medications for COVID-19 Patients – Guidance is now available for primary care physicians and pharmacists on specific prescription medications for community patients with COVID-19. The recommendations are meant to support patient care decisions on a case by case basis and are not meant to replace individualized clinical judgement. It is not designed to inform a COVID-19 treatment regimen.

These recommendations focus on proper use of the following medications in the context of COVID-19 infection:

1. Angiotensin Converting Enzyme Inhibitors (ACEi) and Angiotensin Receptor Blockers (ARB)
2. Immunosuppressive medications
3. Respiratory conditions requiring the use of inhaled corticosteroids or oral corticosteroids
4. Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs including acetylsalicylic acid

For patient specific questions please contact the patient’s known specialist, if applicable. If not applicable, please contact ConnectMD or Specialist Link for access to specialist advice through the COVID-19 tele-advice lines, if needed. For more information and updates on this document, visit ahs.ca/COVID.

- **NEW** – Use of Non-AHS Zoom Accounts – AHS Virtual Health is offering Zoom video conferencing to support virtual care encounters between clinicians and with patients, including those who are either in self-isolation, unable to attend an AHS clinic or are located in rural and remote areas. Clinicians are reminded to only use their AHS Zoom account when providing virtual care, and not their personal or University accounts. Non-AHS Zoom accounts are not certified for healthcare delivery through relevant governance bodies. To learn more, please see the Virtual Health Support Kit for Zoom, as well as the Virtual Health information page on Insite.

Workplace Health and Safety

- No new updates.

Wellness Resources for Physicians

- **Physician Weekly Peer Support Zoom Room** – AHS Medical Staff are invited to a community of practice hosted every Monday and Wednesday, 4 – 5 p.m., hosted by Dr. Debrah Wirtzelfeld, Associate Chief Medical Officer, Physician Health, Diversity & Wellness. These sessions are an opportunity to discuss wellness challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. Click here to register and you will be emailed meeting details. On April 22, we will be joined by Marlies Van Dijk,
Provincial Quality Improvement Lead, QHI who will unpack the huge pivot that we have made in healthcare and how we can capitalize on the new world.

Coming soon

- No new updates.

Resources for Physicians:

- AHS Virtual Health
- COVID—19 FAQ for Clinicians
- COVID-19 Testing and Self-Isolation Criteria
- CPSA’s physician portal – indicate your availability to be redeployed to support the COVID-19 response
- Cumming School of Medicine Continuing Medical Education (CME) Resources
- C. Donning and doffing of PPE
- How to Access AHS Insite and Email
- How to do a Nasopharyngeal (NP) Swab (New England Journal of Medicine)
- IPC Emerging Issues
- Online Healthcare Worker Self-Assessment Tool
- Physician & Family Support Program - 1-877-SOS-4MDS (767-4637)
- Spectrum – A mobile app customized to deliver local antimicrobial stewardship guidelines, resistance data, dosing information, and AHS COVID-19 related content.
- Well Doc Alberta Wellness tips for Physicians during COVID-19
- COVID-19 Questions? Contact your local Zone Emergency Operations Centre (ZEOC):
  - ZEOC.South@ahs.ca
  - ZEOC.Calgary@ahs.ca
  - ZEOC.Central@ahs.ca
  - ZEOC.Edmonton@ahs.ca
  - PHC.ZEOCNorth@ahs.ca
- If you would like Zone MOH to assist in risk assessment, contact your Zone Medical Officer of Health on call.

For more information

- Visit the COVID-19 Healthcare Professional information page on the AHS website for more information or contact AHS.ECC@ahs.ca.
- Additional updates and information are being shared through the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta (CPSA).
- AHS Medical Staff can also view the daily update from the AHS CEO and Senior Medical Officer of Health (SMOH) by accessing their AHS email inbox.