CMO Weekly Update for AHS Medical Staff

This update is intended to provide a summary of the key action items, information and decisions for AHS Medical Staff in relation to clinical policies and practices, and for the COVID-19 pandemic response. It is forwarded to physicians’ preferred email inbox. Please review these updates regularly.

This update will be provided every Friday.

Update for October 9, 2020:

Happy Thanksgiving, everyone. We are thankful for everything you’ve done over the past nine months since we became aware of the threat to Alberta posed by COVID-19. Today, we are asking for your continued help to slow the spread of COVID-19 in our facilities and in the province, as the average number of daily new cases continues to rise from week to week — and what we’re seeing in the Edmonton Zone is particularly concerning.

Provincewide, the average number of daily new cases for the week ending on Oct. 7 rose 45 per cent compared to the previous week — from an average of 152 daily new cases to 220.

Edmonton Zone accounted for three of every five new cases in the province last week. During this period, the zone reported an average of 137 new daily cases, up from 82 the previous week, a 66 per cent increase. At more than 10 cases per 100,000, Edmonton Zone is experiencing the highest seven-day rolling average since the start of the pandemic. Alberta Health has imposed some voluntary restrictions on the Edmonton Zone, but the situation isn’t limited to Edmonton and we all have a role to play.

As healthcare professionals and leaders in your communities, you can continue to make a difference.

The best protection is to avoid crowding and maintain physical distancing whenever possible. At work, wearing a mask at all times can help keep everyone safe. This is a requirement, not an expectation, and applies to all zones, and all AHS or subsidiary facilities (clinical and corporate), in all settings where there may be contact with patients, families, visitors or the public, and in all other areas where physical distancing of two metres cannot be maintained.

In your communities this Thanksgiving weekend and beyond, please set an example and remind family, friends and neighbours about the importance of following public health guidelines. Minimize the number of people you socialize with from outside your household, and keep Thanksgiving celebrations as small as possible. Host your gathering outside if possible, and ensure tables are arranged to keep six feet between members of different households, paying particular attention to people at higher risk. Designate one person to serve all food, so people don’t have to share serving utensils. When feeling sick, cancel the event if need be, stay home and use the AHS online self-assessment tool to guide your next steps.

Wash your hands regularly with soap and warm water, and avoid touching your face. Wear a mask when outside of your cohort and/or in public when physical distancing of two metres cannot be maintained.
Other notable COVID-19-related statistics:

- In the past seven days, individuals 20 to 49 years of age accounted for half of all new cases in the province.
- Currently, 77 people are in hospital with the virus and 13 of them are in an intensive care unit.
- Fourteen Albertans passed away between Oct. 1 and Oct. 7. We extend our deepest sympathies to the families of these individuals, and to all who have lost loved ones during this time. In total, since the start of the pandemic in this province, 283 Albertans have died from COVID-19.
- As of Oct. 7, a total of 1,472,658 tests have been conducted. In the past week, 107,075 tests were completed for an average of 15,296 per day. The daily positivity rate on Oct. 7 was 2.13 per cent. This is the first time since mid-May the daily positivity rate was above two per cent.
- As of Oct. 8, AHS has confirmed that 387 individuals with COVID-19 were present at schools while infectious. Currently, 230 out of 2,415 schools in the province have reported that an infectious individual has attended their school.

We can all work together to stop the spread this Thanksgiving holiday: Protect your loved ones by practicing physical distancing. We all have a role to play!

COVID-19 Testing for Healthcare Workers — the Latest Numbers

**UPDATE** – We continue to update the testing data for healthcare workers in the [AHS Healthcare Worker COVID-19 Testing dashboard](https://www.ahs.ca/coronavirus/COVID-19-testing-for-healthcare-workers). These statistics provide the total number of AHS, Covenant Health and Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) employees and physicians tested, including a breakdown of the number of positive tests and those who have been confirmed to have been exposed in the workplace.

As of Oct 7:

- 54,969 employees (AHS, APL, and Covenant combined) have been tested for COVID-19, and of those tested, 625 (or 1.14 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 625 employees who have tested positive, 83 (or 13.3 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure (with 186 of the 625 positive results still under investigation as to the source of infection).
- 3,571 physicians (AHS, APL, and Covenant combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and of those tested, 42 (or 1.18 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 42 physicians who have tested positive, three (or 7.1 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure (with five of the 42 positive results still under investigation as to the source of infection).

For more information, see the [AHS Healthcare Worker COVID-19 Testing infographic](https://www.ahs.ca/coronavirus/COVID-19-testing-for-healthcare-workers) and [dashboard](https://www.ahs.ca/coronavirus/COVID-19-testing-for-healthcare-workers).

💡 What you need to know

**UPDATE** – **Fight the Flu** – Flu season is around the corner. This year, more than ever before, we all need to get immunized against influenza this season.
Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) flu clinics and site champions (Insite page, login required) begin offering the flu shot on October 14 to all members of our workforce. AHS physicians can get immunized by the site champion on their unit or they can:

- Check their site to find clinic details or a roving cart.
- Attend a WHS flu clinic. Use the flu clinic finder tool to locate a clinic near them.

Influenza immunization is available for all Albertans, beginning October 19th.

For Albertans aged five and older, the easiest way to get a flu shot is through a local pharmacist or physician. Call ahead to confirm availability.

AHS will offer the flu shot to children under age 5, and their family and household members, only. Appointments are required, and will be available to book online, starting October 13. Visit ahs.ca/influenza for more.

Family physicians will offer vaccines to all Albertans nine years of age and older.
- Some physicians may be offering vaccines to children six months up to and including eight years of age as well. Clinics will need to contact their zone contact if they are interested in providing immunizations to this age group, as there are additional reporting requirements.

NOTE: AHS staff and physicians who get immunized at a public health clinic, pharmacist, or doctor’s office are reminded to report their immunization status.

Please check Insite for details on immunization options and what to expect when attending a WHS flu clinic. Medical leaders can find additional resources and tools to support this year’s campaign, here.

Save Lives…Immunize!

For Community Physicians – Primary Care Networks will receive information through the Zones. Other information about influenza is being shared with Primary Care Networks and community physicians on the AHS.ca/flu/communityphysicians webpage.

NEW – Misericordia Community Hospital – Following an investigation, two units at the Misericordia Community Hospital have been placed on outbreak after COVID-19 cases were identified. As of October 8, 2020, there are a total of eight positive patient cases linked to the MCH outbreaks and three positive healthcare workers. The number of health care workers who are currently in isolation is 29.

Contract tracing is ongoing, and the situation is being closely monitored. Enhanced screening measures among patients and unit healthcare workers have been implemented, and the hospital has increased infection prevention and control measures on the units to further ensure the continued safety of all patients and healthcare workers. All patients on the affected units have been tested, as well as all staff who have either worked on or have been present on those units even if they are not showing symptoms.

Visitation to these units has been temporarily restricted for the health and safety of patients and staff. We encourage families to meet with their loved ones virtually. The MCH ED remains open and there is no impact to all other services at the MCH at this time.
**UPDATE – Foothills Medical Centre Outbreak** – A COVID-19 outbreak was declared at Foothills Medical Centre (FMC) on September 17, 2020, and as of October 8, 2020, the total number of positive patient cases is 42, up seven from last week’s update, and the total number of positive healthcare workers is 36, up seven from the previous update.

Multiple teams are working daily to determine where the infection may have started, how it was transmitted and who needs to be contacted and tested to limit exposure. This is standard procedure in our contact tracing that we implement with any outbreak.

The Outbreak Management Team continues to investigate and actively manage the current situation at FMC. This includes the Calgary Zone Medical Officer of Health, IPC, WHS, Public Health, Environmental Services, Communications, Unit Management and Site and Medical Leadership.

Most patients who are linked to these outbreaks have been identified and testing is well underway. Almost all health care workers who may have been affected have also been identified and engagement with this group is ongoing.

From September 19 to October 7, a cumulative total of 311 healthcare workers (HCWs) have been restricted from work at some point during the outbreak investigation due to association with outbreak units or contact tracing. HCWs have started returning to the hospital this week after completion of their isolation period.

More than 2,300 COVID-19 tests have been completed onsite with healthcare workers and physicians since the outbreak was declared.

**Surgeries and visitation**
- Of the 45 surgeries that have been postponed during the outbreak, 27 have been rescheduled.
- AHS recognizes that rescheduling elective procedures may be stressful and worrisome. These decisions are carefully considered with patient safety at the centre of each individual circumstance.
- Urgent and emergency surgeries are continuing.
- Enhanced visitor restrictions are in effect site-wide. While we appreciate this may be difficult for patients, families and friends, visitation to FMC is restricted to end of life situations or pre-approved essential visitors.

For more updates about the Foothills Medical Centre outbreak, please visit [ahs.ca/covidfmc](http://ahs.ca/covidfmc).

**Reminder: There are critical actions you can take to support outbreak prevention and management:**
- Observe continuous masking, including during teaching sessions and rounds. Ensure a minimum of two metres of physical distance, particularly when eating or drinking.
- Remain vigilant with proper use of PPE.
- Look for opportunities to show patience and be kind!
- Stay home if unwell, and complete the self-assessment tool for health care workers found [here](http://here) or call 811; please also contact your medical leader.
Please also consider your personal exposures outside of work as this has an impact on patient safety.

**Physician Wellness**

**REMinDEr – Save the date for a webinar: Identifying and Managing Violence in the Workplace: Experiences and Strategies**  – On October 21, 2020, between 7-9 p.m., join in for this, the first of a two part webinar series. These moderated panel-based sessions will offer conversations about issues of concern that affect safety in the workplace, including ideas for how to enhance safety, what processes are available and the organizational and regulatory commitments that enhance safety for providers.

This event is hosted by PROactive: Partners in Professionalism, a collaborative effort between Alberta Health Services, Alberta Medical Association, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta, the Health Quality Council of Alberta, AHS, AMA, CPSA, HQCA, and the Faculties of Medicine at the University of Calgary and the University of Alberta, to explore means of enhancing professionalism within Medicine and advancing the principles of a just culture.

Speaker information and registration will be available soon from the Continuing Medical Education and Professional Development Office at the University of Calgary, Cumming School of Medicine.

**Physician Zoom Rooms**
The weekly physician wellness Zoom rooms are temporarily on hold as we develop new sessions and reimagine time, frequency and format for future offerings. More information will be shared soon.

Please submit feedback and suggestions to MDWellness@ahs.ca.

For additional support, please reach out to the following confidential support services available for physicians:

- **Physician and Family Support Program** (PFSP) by the Alberta Medical Association. The support line at 1-877-SOS-4MDS (767-4637) is available 24-7.
- The Canadian Psychological Association offers a free psychologist.

Educational resources that support physician wellness:

- AHS Physician Wellness, Diversity and Leadership page, [www.ahs.ca/mdwellness](http://www.ahs.ca/mdwellness), physicians can find wellness zoom rooms, and tips and guides to cope with stress.
- Well Doc Alberta at [www.welldocalberta.org](http://www.welldocalberta.org)

**Beyond the Pandemic**

**NEW – May Cohen Award for Women Mentors Recipient**  – Dr. Vanessa Maclean, longtime Lethbridge physician and former Medical Director in the South Zone of Alberta Health Services, has received the May Cohen Award for Women Mentors. The award is presented to a female physician and Canadian Medical Association member who has demonstrated outstanding mentoring.

Starting out as a family physician in Lethbridge (1987), she moved on to become an emergency room doctor, then Medical Director for the zone. Dr. Maclean retired from that position in 2016, but is still active in the medical community.
As medical director, she kept an eye out for promising young physicians with big ideas, making sure they had a chance to be heard, and made herself available when they needed advice or support. In 2017, she conducted a review of the experience of female physician leaders in Alberta, which found that women are under-represented in leadership positions in health care, and they encounter a wide range of barriers to achieving those positions. The findings of this review have contributed to the creation of a new Associate Chief Medical Officer position focused on medical leadership, physician wellness, gender and diversity. “The findings made me even more passionate about reaching out and supporting women in, or aspiring to, leadership roles.” Today, Dr. Maclean's work focuses primarily on the establishment of Connect Care, and she is still actively mentoring women and other emerging leaders.

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.

Resources for Physicians:
- AHS Virtual Health
- COVID-19 FAQ for Clinicians
- COVID-19 Testing and Self-Isolation Criteria
- CPSA's physician portal
- Cumming School of Medicine Continuing Medical Education (CME) Resources
- 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.
- Physician Wellness Educational Resources: Well Doc Alberta
- 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
  - PCH.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.

Sincerely,