CMO Weekly Update for AHS Medical Staff

This update, provided every Friday, 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.

Do you have COVID-19 questions, information, or a physician or team who have gone above and beyond during the pandemic, that you would like to see covered in an upcoming edition of the COVID-19 CMO update? Let us know at CMO@ahs.ca.

November 20, 2020

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COVID-19 Case Status in Alberta

Alberta reached a troubling milestone this past week when, for the first time, the province surpassed 1,000 daily new COVID-19 cases — not just once but twice, with 1,036 cases reported on Nov. 13 and a record 1,107 cases yesterday (Nov. 18). Overall, the average number of daily new cases for the week ending on Nov. 18 is 913, compared to 741 cases the previous week, a 23 per cent increase. Over that period, there were 3,622 cases among individuals aged 20 to 49 years, which is 57 per cent of all new cases.

Sadly, there’s another grim milestone to report. The number of active cases in the province surpassed 10,000 this week. As of Nov. 18, there are 10,382 active cases. The Edmonton Zone has the most active cases with 4,388 active cases, accounting for 42
per cent of all active cases. The Calgary Zone has 4,219 active cases, accounting for 41 per cent of all active cases.

Hospitalizations and ICU admissions
The record numbers of new daily cases and active cases continue to drive up our hospitalization and ICU numbers, with both measurements hitting new highs this past week. On Nov. 17, there was a record number of 293 of individuals being treated in Alberta hospitals with 59 in ICU. Currently, there are 284 hospitalizations, with a record 61 in ICUs. This is a 36 per cent increase in total hospital admissions from the previous week ending Nov. 11.

AHS has the ability to create temporary ICU space in spaces that would otherwise be used to care for patients who have other conditions requiring specialized care, such as coronary care and post-operative recovery, and from other areas able to support ventilators and cardiac monitoring. In Edmonton and Calgary, 20 beds are being added in both zones. More ICU and acute care beds will be added in the days and weeks to come.

AHS has been training additional staff in the use of ventilators, an intervention that is needed in approximately 60 to 80 per cent of COVID-19 patients admitted into an ICU.
Other notable COVID-19-related information:

- As of Nov. 18, a total of 42,797 cases of COVID-19 have occurred in Alberta and a total of 1,516 individuals have been hospitalized, which amounts to 3.5 individuals for every 100 cases. In all, 31,964 Albertans have recovered from COVID-19.

- Since the start of the pandemic in this province, 451 Albertans have died from COVID-19, including 58 in the current week. We extend our condolences to the families of these individuals, and to all who have lost loved ones during this time.

- Alberta Health is still experiencing some issues with its laboratory testing reporting of COVID-19 but we know that there have been a total of 1,388,093 people tested at least once for COVID-19, and a total of 2,051,622 tests performed by the lab.

- As of Nov. 19, AHS has confirmed 1,806 individuals with COVID-19 were present at schools while infectious or acquired the disease in the school setting. Currently, about one in four schools in the province (649 of 2,415) has reported an individual attending the school while infectious or had in-school transmission.

Provincial PPE Safety Coach Program Launch

As we continue to work together to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our facilities, appropriate selection and use of personal protective equipment (PPE) remains critical. To support AHS staff in appropriate selection, donning and doffing of PPE, AHS has launched a new voluntary Provincial PPE Safety Coach Program.

The Provincial PPE Safety Coach Program will train staff to provide peer-to-peer support and on-site education of proper PPE selection and donning and doffing techniques, complementing existing programs, or as a standalone program in areas that do not currently have a PPE support program.
Once trained, these Safety Coaches will be available and accessible on each shift to provide PPE guidance and support to their colleagues.

If you are interested in becoming a PPE Safety Coach, please speak to your manager directly, no later than December 3.

Identified staff will be required to complete online training that has been developed by AHS' Infection Prevention and Control, and endorsed by Workplace Health and Safety. The training will take approximately two hours, and can be found at: ahs.ca/ppesafetycoach.

It is our goal to have PPE Coaches active on sites before the end of 2020.

Thank you for your continued effort to keep yourselves, your colleagues and your patients safe during these unprecedented times.

For more information on the program please visit ahs.ca/ppesafetycoach.

**Physician Wellness**

**Physician Wellness Zoom Rooms**
Available every second Tuesday from 5-6 p.m.

**Date:** Tuesday, December 1, 5-6 p.m.
**Topic:** Self-care and support of colleagues experiencing cumulative loss and grief
**Speaker:** Kathleen Fraser, Provincial Program Director, Respectful Workplaces, EMS
**Join:** [Here](#).

**Outbreak Information**

**NEW – Verna’s Weekly Video Message — our outbreak response**
One of the many things we’re proud of is our reputation as a learning organization. You’ve helped build our culture of learning and innovation, which has been serving us well during this pandemic. It’s allowed us to be nimble and adapt our provincial response to COVID-19 as needed.

Our ability to adapt helps ensure we can adapt consistent best practices across AHS, and that we have the supports in place to continue to limit the spread of COVID-19 in the months ahead.

To that end, much work has been done by our provincial Acute Care Outbreak Prevention and Management Task Force to understand how best to reduce the risk of an acute care outbreak occurring, while ensuring our response is carried out efficiently, and effectively.

Joining Verna to talk about COVID-19 outbreaks, how we’ve responded and what we’ve learned are:
• Linda Iwasiw, Interim Chief Zone Officer, South Zone
• David Zygun, Edmonton Zone Medical Director, and
• Peter Jamieson, Medical Director Foothills Hospital, Associate Calgary Zone Medical Director, and Medical Advisor for the AHS Emergency Coordination Centre.

Linda, David and Peter discuss their experience with outbreaks, how we can support our people through them, and the work of the Acute Care Outbreak Prevention and Management Task Force.

Watch the video here.

For more information, please visit the Insite page (login required).

**COVID-19 Testing Updates**

**UPDATE – COVID-19 Testing for Healthcare Workers – the Latest Numbers**

We continue to update the testing data for healthcare workers in the AHS Healthcare Worker COVID-19 Testing dashboard. 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 November 18:

- 64,143 employees (AHS, APL, and Covenant combined) have been tested for COVID-19, and of those tested, 1,451 (or 2.26 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 666 employees who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, 191 (or 28.6 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 785 employees who have tested positive are still under investigation as to the source of infection.
- 4,109 physicians (AHS, APL, and Covenant combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and of those tested, 74 (or 1.8 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 42 physicians who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, seven (or 16.7 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 32 physicians who have tested positive are still under investigation as to the source of infection.

For more information, see the AHS Healthcare Worker COVID-19 Testing infographic and dashboard.

**Doc of the Week**

*This week’s nominee is Dr. Odell Pui.*

Dr. Odell Pui was appointed to the position of Co-Facility Medical Director of East Edmonton Health Centre in 2019. Since then, he has gone above and beyond to help support others. During Connect Care Wave 1 Launch, he spent countless hours in
launch support, supporting staff and physicians for both the Family Care Clinic and the Urgent Care Centre.

When the pandemic hit, he worked with medical and operations leadership to establish contingency plans for the clinic. He continues to work behind the scenes to ensure adequate operations and hiring of physicians during this period of transition and uncertainty.

Throughout the pandemic, he continues to provide primary care to his own panel of patients. Additionally, he works with other providers in the clinic to ensure continuity of care for the more challenging patients of the clinic who no longer have PCPs at the clinic.

Most recently, during Connect Care Wave 2 Launch, Dr. Pui provided in-person, on-site Super User support to the Ambulatory clinics at the Northeast Community Health Centre in response to a short-notice request by the CMIO.

For what has been a relentless year for all physicians and community, Dr. Pui has risen to the ongoing challenges. Both his leadership and his service are greatly appreciated.

Note: The email address provided last week for nominations was incorrect. Please email CMO@ahs.ca with your suggestion for nominations, and a brief description of why.

Alberta Precision Lab Completed Two Million COVID-19 Tests

Congratulations on another COVID-19 testing milestone! On Sunday, November 15, Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) reached another milestone — completing two million tests for COVID-19 through the provincial testing program. This is the direct result of the hard work and dedication APL staff have shown throughout the challenging journey we have been on since the pandemic reached Canada at the beginning of this year.

It took more than six months to reach the first million tests on Sept. 3, but the second million were completed in less than half that time. And it was all done with an unwavering commitment to protecting the health and safety of each other and our patients.

Congratulations, and thank you to the teams at APL for everything they have done to put Alberta in the top ranks in terms of per-capita COVID-19 testing in Canada.

Accreditation Canada Results

In fall 2020, accreditation activities resumed across the province, focused on urban and regional hospital programs (Emergency Department, Inpatient (medicine) services, Peri-operative and invasive procedures, and Transplant Care), EMS services, as well as provincial Corrections Health and South Zone rural hospitals (both deferred from spring).
Accreditation Canada surveyors conducted 900+ interviews at 64 locations and commended our staff for making them feel very welcome and demonstrating great pride in the work they do every day.

Surveyors felt confident the care being provided was truly a standard and not a test of surveyor’s presence, and again acknowledged the unwavering dedication of our staff to providing quality care throughout the pandemic. The surveyors highlighted our caring, compassionate people and the collaboration that occurs at all levels of the organization.

Thank you to those involved for showcasing to the surveyors what a truly great organization we are. The demonstrated ability to balance many important priorities, including Connect Care implementation as well as quality and safety work, while at the same time delivering excellent patient care is commendable.

We want to thank everyone who participated; additionally, the surveyors want to extend their gratitude to all staff, physicians and volunteers across the organization for their dedication and compassion throughout the pandemic to keep Albertans safe.

**Clinical Guidance**

The Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) conducted a rapid review to assess the testing characteristics of the rapid COVID-19 tests on the market, in comparison to the current RT-PCR test, and where they might be used to greatest benefit in Alberta.

The review found that studies validating rapid test platforms are generally at high risk of bias and often do not report the sensitivity and specificity of the platform.

The Scientific Advisory Groups suggested that the rapid testing platforms under consideration for implementation in Alberta must be evaluated in comparison to the molecular tests currently used by Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) (the reference standard) for the diagnosis of COVID-19 to clarify testing characteristics and inform optimal deployment.

The availability of the two types of test kits, Abbott ID NOW (RT-PCR) and Panbio (Antigen), from the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) are a driver behind this review, as the federal government is providing the kits at no cost to the province. However, the availability of the kits is currently limited, which will need to be considered in how they are used. Possible areas of use are described in the [review](#).

**NEW – Rapid Review: Testing Characteristics of Saliva and Specimens from Asymptomatic Individuals**
SAG conducted a rapid review to explore COVID-19 testing characteristics of samples collected from nasal, nasopharyngeal (NP), and/or throat/oropharyngeal (OP) swabs and how they compare to saliva samples.
Overall the review supported the current practice of using NP or OP swabs as the preferred methods of COVID-19 sample collection in Alberta.

This updated a previous rapid review comparing the samples retrieved from NP, nasal and OP swabs to address concerns of variability between the different methods, with additional data from studies evaluating saliva as an additional potential sample method for testing.

For more information, see the Rapid Review.

**Connect Care Kudos**

Following the roll out of Wave 2 on October 23, there have been many messages of thanks to the teams. We’d like to share a few to recognize the teams and tremendous work that went into a successful implementation of Wave 2 Connect Care.

**Thank You Wave 2 Users:** To the new Wave 2 Connect Care users, we want to thank you for all that you have done for this successful rollout of Wave 2. As part of this launch, you and your colleagues helped us achieve a 4/5 rating from Epic on the Wave 2 implementation. Under normal conditions this would be an extremely great achievement, never mind doing it under the current circumstances. Keep up the good work. ~ The AHS Board

**Kudos to UAH Dialysis:** I was a super user for Wave 1, and I must congratulate all individuals on the dialysis unit at UAH that were involved with the implementation of Wave 2. Staff are functioning at a week three level; they are very confident in opening the chart of the outpatients on dialysis, they calmly navigate through the record when looking for patient information.

Lessons learned and recommendation from Wave 1 have been implemented. The patients were well aware of the changes that were occurring; it's obvious the changes were shared with them. Physicians were present to support the staff. The therapy plans are complete, it is evident the success is due to a lot of hard work from all staff involved. I have been very impressed with the calm atmosphere: a real collaborative atmosphere!

**Congratulations and Thank You:** A huge congratulations and thank you to all the staff who have worked so hard on preparing for the Wave 2 launch! The use of Connect Care will positively impact your clinical practice for years to come. The preparation efforts that you have all made while responding to the pandemic at the same time are so incredibly impressive. Thank you!

**Influenza Immunization**

**Influenza Immunization Update – Nov. 20**

More than 1.2 million doses of influenza vaccine have been administered in Alberta, an increase of more than 93,000 doses from last week. To date, there have been no reported cases of seasonal influenza. The fourth weekly influenza data report is now available at ahs.ca/influenza.
This continues to be a great start to the season. However, with the cases of COVID-19 on the rise, we need to keep doing what we can to keep influenza out of our healthcare system, so we can focus on COVID-19.

Now more than ever, each of us must do our part to protect ourselves, our patients, families and vulnerable members of our society from any illness, including influenza.

Getting immunized against the flu is one simple action we can all take to reduce the chance of getting sick and prevent the spread of illness to others while also helping to limit the strain on our healthcare system.

All staff and every Albertan is encouraged to get the vaccine. While more than a million doses have been administered, we can still do better. Every person immunized against the flu adds another layer of protection to keep Albertans healthy, safe and out of our hospitals – a necessity as we also battle COVID-19.

Staff can connect with the site champion on their unit, find a roving cart or check Insite for other options to get immunized. If you’ve already received your flu shot, use your voice to share why immunization is important and encourage those around you to get the vaccine.

And, remember to take your family. Attend a local pharmacy, doctor’s office or public health clinic. Check ahs.ca/influenza for age eligibility, vaccine availability and other details about this year’s public health flu campaign. Remember to submit your immunization status if you get the flu shot at a community-based option.

While there are no reported cases of influenza yet, it’s important to take influenza seriously. It’s an illness that can have devastating consequences for people who are immunocompromised, pregnant, seniors, young children and those with chronic health conditions.

Save Lives…Immunize!

**Digital Health Week**

AHS Virtual Health is excited to showcase the dedication and hard work being done by clinical programs and teams in delivering virtual care across the province.

This week (November 16 to 22) AHS is celebrating Digital Health Week, creating opportunities to build awareness about digital health within our organization. We invite all AHS staff, physicians, patients and families to register on www.together4health.ahs.ca/VirtualHealth to share their successful experiences in providing and receiving virtual care.

The pandemic accelerated much of this work and great strides have been made to ensure we can safely deliver Quality Virtual Care – Anytime, Anywhere.
Additional Resources for Physicians:

- AHS Virtual Health
- COVID-19 FAQ for Clinicians
- COVID-19 Testing and Self-Isolation Criteria
- Acute Care Outbreak Prevention & Management Task Force
- CPSA’s physician portal
- Cumming School of Medicine Continuing Medical Education (CME) Resources
- 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,

Dr. Braden Manns on behalf of Dr. Francois Belanger
Associate Chief Medical Officer

Dr. Laura McDougall
Senior Medical Officer of Health