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To: Christine Dalglish
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Canadian Pharmacists Association
Association des pharmaciens du Canada

The Weekly

Latest pharmacy developments in response to COVID-19

April 14, 2021

CPhA

Upcoming webinar: The SARS-CoV-2 virus: Variants, evolution and the impact on pharmacy

In 2021, the anticipated evolution of SARS-CoV-2 through mutation has occurred, with numerous variants of concern beginning to dominate. This development has made the pandemic more complicated, and how we mitigate these changes through immunization and continued social distancing will determine when the pandemic will end. Join us on April 23 at 12pm EDT for our next COVID Conversations webinar, where our expert panel will discuss this issue and help interpret the science in a way that will be meaningful to your practice and your patients.

[Registration is free and open to all.](#)

New video: Pharmacy vaccination key messages for patients

COVID-19 vaccinations are underway at many community pharmacies across Canada, with many more being added this week. Take a look at our new [explainer video](#), with advice for patients on what pharmacists want them to know about getting vaccinated at the pharmacy. French version coming soon.

Updated chart: Pharmacy involvement in COVID-19 vaccination

As COVID-19 vaccination rollouts continue, CPhA is making weekly updates to our Pharmacy Involvement in COVID Vaccination map, staying on top of the role pharmacists are playing in the

vaccination effort. The graphic is available in [English](#) and [French](#).

CPhA's COVID-19 web pages are being updated regularly at www.pharmacists.ca/covid19 and www.pharmacists.ca/covid19fr.

Provincial

SK pharmacists to administer COVID-19 vaccines week of April 26

Saskatchewan pharmacists and pharmacy technicians are expected to begin administering the COVID-19 vaccine on April 26 as the provincial government rolls out a pilot program, [writes Canadian Healthcare Network \(subscriber access required\)](#). Depending on supply, the pilot is expected to begin with 10,000 doses being sent to 66 pharmacies in 35 communities across the province, says Dawn Martin, Pharmacy Association of Saskatchewan (PAS) executive director. Due to supply issues, the doses will include Pfizer at first, with Moderna later that week or into early May. On April 12, the government announced that pharmacists will also be able to vaccinate essential services workers in pharmacies and grocery stores (should the grocery store have a pharmacy located in it). "It's going to be a challenge if supply can't keep up, but hopefully it won't be too challenging in the first couple of weeks," Martin says.

ON expands COVID-19 vaccination locations to more pharmacies

The Ontario government is rapidly increasing capacity in its COVID-19 vaccine rollout with the addition of over 700 pharmacies across the province, according to a Government of Ontario [news release](#). These locations will start offering the AstraZeneca vaccine to individuals aged 55 and older throughout this week. The expansion will bring the total number of pharmacies offering the vaccine to over 1,400 locations; this number is expected to reach approximately 1,500 by the end of April. Expansion of pharmacies into hot spot communities also helps to increase access to vaccines for populations that have been most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic so far. Site selection also included input from local public health units, the Ontario Pharmacists Association (OPA) and Neighbourhood Pharmacy Association of Canada (NPAC).

National

Free webinar: Important information for health-care providers about Moderna vaccine

Join Moderna for a free webinar to learn about its COVID-19 vaccine, which has been authorized for use under an interim order in Canada. There will be a live Q&A with the presenter following the presentation. The webinar is being presented in English on [April 21](#) at 2pm EDT and on [May 4](#) at 1pm EDT. It is also being offered in French on [April 20](#) at 2pm EDT and [May 5](#) at 12pm EDT.

Pharmacists, family doctors a "key part" of solution to ending COVID-19 pandemic: UW professor

With more pharmacists now involved in the distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine, Kelly Grindrod

says the move is a sign of more vaccines to come — and pharmacists and family doctors will have an important role to play in increasing access to inoculation, [says Kitchener Today](#). Grindrod, an associate professor at the University of Waterloo School of Pharmacy, says pharmacies and family doctors carry a level of trust with their patients that can help when individuals might be hesitant about receiving the COVID-19 vaccine. Aside from that trust, Grindrod says the widespread rollout of vaccines to local pharmacies also brings an added element of convenience and accessibility, as the majority of Canadians live within 5 km of a pharmacy.

Canada receives first report of blood clot linked to AstraZeneca

Concerns about vaccine safety emerged again on April 13, as Canada reported its first case of vaccine-induced blood clots linked to the AstraZeneca vaccine and the US put the brakes on the Johnson & Johnson vaccine following 6 reports of blood clots there, [reports the Canadian Press](#). Officials in both countries, however, continue to stress that the vaccines are safe and their benefits outweigh their risks, even as investigations into what is causing the clots continue. The vaccine news is also dropping as the third wave of COVID-19 is exploding. Canada now has one of the highest rates of new cases in the world, with a record number of patients in critical care. Last week, Europe and the United Kingdom reported 222 cases of blood clots out of more than 34 million shots given. Health Canada said with all the information it has, the benefits of the vaccine continue to outweigh its risks, particularly as the risk of a vaccine-induced clot is less than one in 100,000.

Canada readjusts COVID-19 vaccine rollout to target front-line workers

Canada is shifting its COVID-19 vaccination campaign to target front-line workers, moving away from a largely age-based rollout as the country tries to get a handle on the raging third wave of the pandemic, [according to Reuters](#). Canada's approach thus far has left many so-called "essential workers" unvaccinated, including daycare providers, bus drivers and meatpackers, all of whom are among those at higher risk of COVID-19 transmission. Provinces are now trying to adjust their strategy to tackle the surge driven by new variants. Targeting front-line workers and addressing occupation risk is vital if Canada wants to get its third wave under control, says Simon Fraser University mathematician and epidemiologist Caroline Colijn, who has modelled Canadian immunization strategies and found "the sooner you put essential workers [in the vaccine rollout plan], the better."

New poll: Most Canadians plan to get COVID-19 vaccine, but safety fears drive hesitancy

A new poll suggests that more Canadians than ever say they intend to get vaccinated against COVID-19, but fear about vaccine safety is the main driver of hesitancy to get an injection, [reports the Canadian Press](#). All this comes as confidence in governments is plummeting in provinces being hit hardest by the third wave of the pandemic. At least 8 in 10 people surveyed last weekend by Leger and the Association for Canadian Studies said they absolutely intend to roll up their sleeve for a vaccine. That number has been steadily rising, starting at 63% in mid-October, rising to 70% in early February and 73% in early March. About 25% of people who

won't or aren't sure if they will be vaccinated cited a conspiracy theory about the vaccine containing microchips, but 94% said they don't feel we know enough about the long-term effects. Other results showed that 86% think side effects are dangerous, while 85% believe the vaccines haven't been tested properly for safety.

International

US urges pause on use of Johnson & Johnson vaccine after rare blood clotting cases

On April 13, US federal authorities recommended that states stop using Johnson & Johnson's (J&J) COVID-19 vaccine while an investigation is being conducted into 6 serious cases of clotting problems — one of which was fatal — that were reported among women who received the vaccine, [STAT reports](#). The blood clots are similar to those reported by several European countries after the use of AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine. As of April 12, more than 6.8 million doses of the J&J vaccine had been administered in the US, and the clotting problem appears to be quite rare. But officials acknowledged that the investigation — and increased use of the vaccine, which was shipped in record numbers last week — could lead to the discovery of more cases.

Government vaccine advisers say they don't foresee AstraZeneca vaccine being used in the US

Vaccine advisers to the federal government [told CNN](#) that they don't foresee AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine being used in the US, given the other available options. Dr. Anthony Fauci said that even if the US Food and Drug Administration granted emergency use authorization to AstraZeneca's vaccine, there's no need for it right now in the United States. "We already have contracted for enough vaccines, from Moderna, from Pfizer and from Johnson & Johnson," he said. "There is no plan to immediately start utilizing the AstraZeneca [vaccine] even if it gets approved through the EUA, which it very well might." Fauci said it wasn't because of the AstraZeneca vaccine itself, but rather that it's not necessary in the US right now. "It's not any indictment against the product. We just have a lot of vaccines," he said.

Australia abandons COVID-19 vaccination targets after new advice on AstraZeneca shots

Australia has abandoned a goal to vaccinate nearly all of its 26 million population by the end of 2021 following advice that people under the age of 50 take Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine rather than AstraZeneca's shot, [according to Reuters](#). The country, which had banked on the AstraZeneca vaccine for the majority of its shots, has no plans to set any new targets for completing its vaccination program, Prime Minister Scott Morrison said in a Facebook post on April 11. "While we would like to see these doses completed before the end of the year, it is not possible to set such targets given the many uncertainties involved," Morrison said.

Pharmacy on the front line

East Toronto pharmacist makes it a priority to vaccinate educators against COVID-19

A pharmacist in east Toronto's Upper Beach area is treating educators as essential workers and doing his part to ensure they get the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as possible, [according to the Toronto Star](#). Kyro Maseh, who owns Lawlor Pharmasave, invited teachers and daycare workers aged 55 and up to stop by his apothecary to get the shot. "I was expecting maybe 6 or 7 teachers from the neighbourhood or local schools would come in and I'd vaccinate them," he said. Instead, word quickly spread on social media and dozens of educators lined up to get vaccinated. Maseh, who made sure to credit his team of dedicated volunteers, said he doesn't regret opening up his pharmacy to educators who want to get vaccinated and said he plans to continue doing so as long as doses are available. "I did what I feel is right...it's just common sense," said Maseh, who recently lost a 38-year-old friend to the virus and wanted to do something positive to channel his grief. "This is what I could do to help."

In-depth

Pharmacies plead with provinces for access to other COVID-19 vaccines

Canadian pharmacies are helping administer COVID-19 vaccines across the country, saying the demand for inoculation is massive. So big, in fact, that many pharmacies are standing by, waiting for the next shipment of vaccines from provinces. As vaccine rollout expands to include a wider variety of age groups, pharmacists say they can play a key role in getting jabs into arms. However, depending on where that pharmacy is located, some may get access to just 1 type of vaccine versus 3. For example, Ontario and British Columbia can only supply their eligible pharmacies with AstraZeneca, which Health Canada has approved only for patients 55 years old and up. Alberta and Nova Scotia supply eligible pharmacies with Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca. [Global News reports](#) on why some jurisdictions allow only AstraZeneca vaccines in pharmacies while others offer all 3 of them.

A look at the rare blood clot condition known as VIPIT

A Quebec woman is the first person in Canada to develop a blood clot after being vaccinated with the AstraZeneca vaccine. The woman received the Serum Institute of India's vaccine known as Covishield and is recovering at home, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) said April 13. Reports of blood clots with low platelets in people who received the shot are very rare, PHAC said. The *Canadian Press* [takes a look](#) at this rare condition. PHAC has also released an information bulletin on vaccine-induced prothrombotic immune thrombocytopenia (VIPIT) for health-care providers, available in [English](#) and in [French](#).

This weekly COVID-19 update is compiled by the Canadian Pharmacists Association. Please note that this publication is meant to inform and is not a comprehensive list of information available. Be sure to check with your provincial regulatory authority or advocacy association for province-specific information. While we aim to ensure all information contained in this update is accurate, the situation is evolving rapidly and CPhA does not take responsibility for the content provided by other organizations and sources.

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