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Sent: April 21, 2021 5:00 PM
To: Christine Dalglish
Subject: The Weekly: CPhA's COVID-19 Update for April 21



Canadian Pharmacists Association
Association des pharmaciens du Canada

The Weekly

Latest pharmacy developments in response to COVID-19

April 21, 2021

CPhA

CPhA organizes meeting with pharmacists, Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister to discuss COVID-19 vaccination efforts across Canada

On April 21, CPhA and 10 pharmacists from across Canada met with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland in a [virtual meeting](#) to discuss how pharmacists across Canada are contributing to ongoing COVID-19 vaccination efforts. The pharmacists shared their front-line experiences, and both Mr. Trudeau and Ms. Freeland expressed their gratitude to the profession for their work throughout the pandemic. We look forward to continued discussions with the federal government on how pharmacists can continue to contribute to the health and well-being of Canadians.

Pharmacies across Canada underutilized; call for governments to expand vaccine access

While most provinces have started to roll out vaccines to pharmacies, access remains limited in many regions, with less than half of pharmacies currently mobilized and many of those still not receiving access to all approved vaccine types, says CPhA in a [statement](#) released April 15. As scheduled vaccine supply continues to ramp up, pharmacies can play a greater role in getting those vaccines into the arms of Canadians. With an adequate supply of vaccines, and by fully utilizing Canada's pharmacy network, pharmacies could administer millions of doses per week. CPhA called on governments to expand access to vaccines in pharmacies by increasing the number of pharmacy locations able to administer and broadening the supply to include Pfizer and Moderna vaccines.

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.

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

Provinces drop age eligibility for giving AstraZeneca vaccine

Younger Canadians in several provinces are now able to get the Oxford-AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine, [according to the Canadian Press](#). Beginning April 20, those aged 40 and over in Ontario and Alberta can get the shot. Previously, the minimum age to receive AstraZeneca was 55 because of a slightly elevated risk of an extremely rare blood clot disorder. British Columbia and Manitoba also dropped the age requirement to 40 on April 19. On April 20, Quebec [announced](#) that it will expand access to the AstraZeneca vaccine to those 45 and over, and Saskatchewan [announced](#) it has dropped the eligibility to 40+ beginning April 28.

ON allows 20 pharmacies to administer COVID-19 vaccines 24/7

The Ontario government has announced that select pharmacies in COVID-19 hot spots will begin to offer vaccinations 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, [says CP24](#). In a [news release](#) issued April 20, the government said that 20 Shoppers Drug Mart locations, including 16 in hot spot communities in Toronto, Peel Region and York Region, will begin administering doses of the vaccine 24/7. The government said that when it receives more vaccine supply, it will expand 24/7 vaccinations to additional hot spots. The announcement comes one day after Premier Ford's office released a statement saying that Ontario has now been informed that it should be "prepared for both shipments to be delayed until the end of May."

ON urged to hold lottery for key drug used on COVID-19 patients

Ontario should set up a lottery to allocate one of the few medications known to reduce mortality

in critically ill COVID-19 patients in case supplies are exhausted during the punishing third wave, according to a new paper from the province's scientific advisers. The [Globe and Mail reports](#) that the Ontario COVID-19 Science Advisory Table is asking the provincial government to prepare for the day hospitals run out of tocilizumab, an anti-inflammatory drug that physicians are [already administering in smaller doses](#) to make limited amounts go further. The preparations for a tocilizumab shortfall in Ontario highlight how the third wave is putting pressure on treatment resources of all kinds, including drugs. Recognizing that strain, the federal government announced last week the creation of a COVID-19 critical drug reserve for medications used to provide supportive care in ICUs, including sedatives and muscle relaxants that are key for patients on ventilators.

SK pharmacy vaccination pilot project delayed due to shortages of doses

Saskatchewan's pharmacy pilot project is being put on hold due to vaccine shipment delays, [according to CKOM Radio](#). Myla Bulych, director of professional practice at the Pharmacy Association of Saskatchewan and a practising pharmacist in Regina, said the plan has been in the works for weeks. The ultimate goal is to have around 400 pharmacies across the province administer vaccines. But before that, about 40 pharmacies were going to be used as a pilot project, with about 10 receiving the Pfizer vaccine and 30 receiving Moderna. But with Moderna shipments being delayed, the pilot project is being delayed for the most part, while pharmacies that were set to get the Pfizer will still go ahead, possibly as early as next week.

Pharmacies reporting steady demand for AZ vaccines in PEI

About a third of the available supply of the AstraZeneca vaccine has now been administered at 12 PEI pharmacies, as people 55+ keep their appointments to be protected against the coronavirus that causes COVID-19, [reports CBC](#). "I think that the people that are coming for the vaccine realize the benefits of getting the vaccine early, getting it as soon as possible," Erin MacKenzie, the executive director of the PEI Pharmacists Association, said on April 15. "We do have lots of vaccine left in all of the 12 participating pharmacies, and because of the short lifespan of the vaccine, once it's been punctured or opened, they have to use the vaccine within 48 hours," she said. "The goal is just to make sure that no doses are wasted."

National

Trudeau, Freeland intend to get AstraZeneca shots at pharmacy

Prime Minister Trudeau told pharmacists during a virtual meeting April 20 that his office is still working out the details, "but I look forward to having a pharmacist give me my vaccine as soon as we can secure an appointment in the proper processes," [according to the Canadian Press](#). Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland, at the same meeting, said she dispatched her children to use their technology skills online to find her a pharmacy appointment. On April 20, Ontario opened up new eligibility for the AstraZeneca vaccine to people aged 40 years and older, which means more people, including Trudeau and Freeland, can now get a dose at a pharmacy. Trudeau said that he gets a flu shot every year at his nearby pharmacy and the experience "is

always unbelievably positive.” He also noted that if he can encourage Canadians to know that getting a vaccine is safe and the right thing to do by getting a shot himself, then he’s “looking forward to that.”

Federal government expecting 1M vaccine doses this week after Moderna delays delivery

The federal government says it expects about 1 million shots of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine to arrive this week, as the 2 pharmaceutical firms continue delivering doses on a regular schedule, [according to the Canadian Press](#). Ottawa had planned to take delivery of about 1.2 million doses from Moderna as well, but that was before government officials revealed last week that the shipment would be both delayed and scaled back. Ottawa is not expecting any deliveries of the AstraZeneca or Johnson & Johnson vaccines over the next 7 days.

International

Australia: COVID-19 impacts on pharmacists revealed

The graphic impacts that COVID-19 has had on Australia’s pharmacists have been revealed by a new study that found high rates of burnout among the profession, [reports AJP.com](#). Researchers surveyed 647 pharmacists during April and June 2020 and found that emotional exhaustion scores were higher than those reported prior to the pandemic. A number of respondents reported that working overtime, medication supply issues and patient incivility had adversely affected their work during the pandemic. A large majority of the respondents (87%) said that their personal life had been impacted, most commonly due to isolation from friends and family. The study was published in the International Journal of Clinical Pharmacy.

Half of US adults now have received at least one COVID-19 shot

Half of all adults in the United States have received at least one COVID-19 shot, the government announced April 18, marking another milestone in the country’s largest-ever vaccination campaign but leaving more work to do to convince skeptical Americans to roll up their sleeves, [Reuters reports](#). Almost 130 million people 18+ have received at least one dose of a vaccine, or 50.4% of the total adult population, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported. Almost 84 million adults, or about 32.5% of the population, have been fully vaccinated.

US: FDA revokes emergency use authorization for monoclonal antibody bamlanivimab

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) [revoked the emergency use authorization](#) (EUA) that allowed for the investigational monoclonal antibody therapy bamlanivimab, when administered alone, to be used for the treatment of mild-to-moderate COVID-19 in adults and certain pediatric patients. Based on its ongoing analysis of emerging scientific data, specifically the sustained increase of COVID-19 viral variants that are resistant to bamlanivimab alone resulting in the increased risk for treatment failure, the FDA has determined that the known and potential benefits of bamlanivimab, when administered alone, no longer outweigh the known and potential risks for its authorized use. The agency determined that the criteria for issuance of an authorization are no longer met and has revoked the EUA.

Pharmacy on the front line

Pharmacist sisters give back to parents by giving them their COVID-19 shot

Two Halifax sisters, who are both pharmacists, had the unique opportunity to give back to their parents earlier this week by giving them their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, [reports CBC](#). Tiffany Savary and Diane Harpell grew up watching their parents run their pharmacy and eventually followed in their father's footsteps to become pharmacists. Harpell now owns The Medicine Shoppe in Dartmouth, NS, which is where her family gathered for the first day of the pharmacy's vaccine clinic. Her sister gave both parents their shot. "I felt honoured to be able to give back to them," said Savary. "We wouldn't be here if my dad wasn't a pharmacist ... so it was kind of going full circle to be able to care for them after they've done everything for us."

In-depth

A chat with a pharmacist may curb vaccine hesitancy

Overcoming vaccine hesitancy may be as simple as making a phone call, according to a new study that highlights the vital role pharmacists play in getting some people to roll up their sleeves. The program, [developed by MDBriefCase](#) and published in [the journal Vaccines](#), showed that a brief conversation with a pharmacist was enough to convince 67% of vaccine-hesitant patients 65 years of age and older to get the flu shot. It also uncovered that there is more than just skepticism hiking the rate of hesitancy. "This is only for this specific vaccine and this older population, but it seems to be that some of the things we hear about in terms of hesitancy may not truly be hesitancy — but actually that it's just not top of mind," Mike Boivin, a pharmacist and co-author of the work, [told Healthing](#).

Understanding the blood clot issue behind the AstraZeneca vaccine and its safety

The AstraZeneca vaccine and the rare but serious blood clots it's associated with have been on everyone's mind lately. That condition has been given the term Vaccine Induced Immune Thrombotic Thrombocytopenia or VIIT. The *Toronto Star* [takes a look at the issue](#) and puts the risks and benefits of the vaccine in perspective.

Worth repeating

"You have a greater risk of being badly injured in a car crash while driving to your vaccination appointment than actually being harmed by a COVID-19 vaccine. Drugs we take every day – Tylenol, birth-control pills, heart medications, sleeping pills – all have potentially severe side effects. We generally accept those risks, or at least don't think of them. Why do we expect vaccines to be magically problem-free when we don't expect that of other drugs?" — The *Globe and Mail's* André Picard on how we've [lost our ability to put risk in perspective](#) when it comes to AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine.

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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