

From: Public & Professional Affairs Department
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CPhA

New practice tools to support pharmacists as opioid stewards during COVID-19

CPhA has developed a series of practice tools to support pharmacists in their role as opioid stewards, using real-life provincial examples to show how pharmacists can manage opioid-related prescriptions under current *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* (CDSA) exemptions to better care for vulnerable patients. The tools cover [accepting a verbal order](#) ([accepter une ordonnance verbale](#)), [adapting a prescription](#) ([adapter une ordonnance](#)), [extending a prescription](#) ([prolonger une ordonnance](#)) and [transferring a prescription](#) ([transférer une ordonnance](#)).

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

Provincial

Shoppers Drug Mart, Loblaw expand asymptomatic testing for COVID-19 across Alberta

Shoppers Drug Mart and its parent company, Loblaw, are expanding asymptomatic testing for COVID-19 to all of their pharmacies across Alberta starting next month, [according to the Edmonton Journal](#). The Alberta government announced yesterday that all 234 locations operated by the 2 companies that have a pharmacy will offer testing as of September 1. This includes pharmacies at Real Canadian Superstore, Independent Foods, Extra Foods, City Market and No Frills. Asymptomatic testing was already being offered at more than 50 locations operated by Shoppers Drug Mart and Loblaw.

Higher percentage of 'cynical spreaders' of COVID-19 in Alberta, survey shows

According to a national poll, 1 in 5 Canadians is making little to no effort to stop the spread of COVID-19, and Alberta is home to a higher percentage of the country's "cynical spreaders," according to a national poll. Results from an [Angus Reid Institute survey](#) place Canadians into 3 broad categories of behaviour and mindset measuring COVID-19 compliance: the Infection Fighters who follow virus suppression behaviours carefully; the Inconsistent who take a more half-in, half-out approach to flattening the curve; and the Cynical Spreaders who have expanded their social circles, don't physically distance and are ambivalent towards handwashing and mask-wearing. Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba are home to the highest percentages of Cynical Spreaders, with 3 in 10 residents in each province falling into this segment.

Survey shows Canadians trust provinces more than federal government with their health care

A Leger poll, in partnership with the Association for Canadian Studies, surveyed 1500 Canadians on which level of government they trust with their health care during the pandemic, [Global News reports](#). The poll shows that voters trust their province more than the federal government by a 2-to-1 ratio with their health care, with 29% saying that they prefer their provincial government over the federal government, 14% believing that they're in better hands with the federal government at the helm, and 34% saying that the responses from both federal and provincial governments have been equally good at handling their health care.

National

Ottawa slow to respond to PPE shortages flagged in February

The public servants who manage the National Emergency Strategic Stockpile (NESS) warned in early February that there was a shortage of the personal protective equipment (PPE) needed to weather a pandemic. But it took weeks for the federal government to sign contracts for goods like N95 respirators, the masks used by health care professionals to protect themselves from COVID-19, [CBC reports](#). The records show that, despite the warning in February, the government signed few contracts for PPE or other equipment, like ventilators, until mid-March.

Webinar: Influenza and COVID-19 – Preparing for the 2020-2021 flu season

Canadian Healthcare Network is [presenting a free webinar](#) on Wednesday, August 26 at 12pm EDT in which Dr. Angel Chu, infectious diseases specialist, will provide insight into better understanding the interplay between influenza and COVID-19. COVID-19 has forcefully reminded people of their vulnerability to infectious diseases. As influenza season approaches, patients face a potential double threat to their health. More than ever, vaccination against influenza is an essential preventative measure, particularly for at-risk groups such as adults aged 65 and older.

International

Upcoming FIP virtual programs address lessons learned during pandemic

The International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) Virtual 2020 program will feature 2 sessions focused on COVID-19. On Tuesday, September 15 at 9am CEST, a talk-show-style session called “COVID-19: Lessons learned and changes for the future,” will feature panellists from FIP member organizations sharing their experiences in Australia, Italy, Spain, Sweden, the UK, China, Taiwan and the US. This will be followed by a session at 11am CEST exploring the development of evidence during a pandemic with speakers from the pharmaceutical industry and public health bodies. [Register here](#).

APhA advocates for provider status for pharmacists

As the US Congress is currently negotiating new emergency legislation to address the COVID-19 pandemic, the American Pharmacists Association (APhA) is ramping up [advocacy efforts](#) to include pharmacists with provider status in any new bill, specifically allowing pharmacists to test Medicare patients for COVID-19 and influenza during the pandemic.

Health improvements that include pharmacy ‘encouraging’: RPS

[Commenting on changes](#) to Public Health England and the announcement of a new National Institute for Health Protection, Claire Anderson, chair of the English Pharmacy Board of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS), says: “Whatever happens with administrative changes, the government must ensure it delivers a compelling vision for public health and prevention... including making most of pharmacy to reduce the backlog of care from COVID-19 and better manage demand across the health service.” She says it is encouraging to hear the secretary of state’s commitment to embedding health improvements across government and the National Health Service (NHS), including pharmacy and primary care. “This now needs to be supported by funding after years of cuts to public health.”

Walgreens rolls out flu shots chain-wide with safety measures

Walgreens is getting a head start on flu season, [according to Drug Store News](#). The retailer has rolled out flu shot availability to all of its almost 9100 pharmacies, adding measures to ensure patient safety. The company noted that the Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend patients older than 6 months old get a flu shot, and that this year flu season will be coinciding with the COVID-19 pandemic. Walgreens also is bringing new safety protocols into play this year, as it announced in June. Among the efforts are enhanced cleaning regimens, social distancing protocols and plexiglass shields at registers. Additionally, all pharmacy team members administering flu shots will be wearing plastic face shields for additional protection, and patients will have their temperature taken alongside a symptom screening before receiving an immunization. The flu shot will be deferred if a patient has fever or other symptoms associated with COVID-19.

AstraZeneca lands deal with EU to provide at least 300 million doses of potential COVID-19 vaccine

The European Union has agreed to buy at least 300 million doses of AstraZeneca's potential COVID-19 vaccine in its first such advance purchase deal, which could weaken plans led by the World Health Organization for a global approach, [Reuters reports](#). The European Commission, which is negotiating on behalf of all 27 EU member states, says the deal includes an option to purchase 100 million additional doses from the British drug maker should its vaccine prove safe and effective.

McKesson tapped to help get COVID-19 vaccines into American communities

The Trump administration has chosen McKesson to be a centralized distributor for future COVID-19 vaccines, a crucial step in creating a pipeline to get any eventual vaccines into American arms and stop the pandemic, [USA Today says](#). Exactly which agency will be coordinating the overall distribution is not clear; however, Operation Warp Speed, the White House task force that has spent more than \$9 billion so far to develop vaccines, has said the Department of Defense will be tasked with the job.

US health official says approval of COVID vaccines unlikely before November

Given the time needed for a large-scale clinical trial, National Institutes of Health director Francis Collins says that any potential COVID-19 vaccine backed by the Trump administration is unlikely to receive a green light from regulators any earlier than November or December, [Reuters reports](#). Collins said last week that he thinks testing a vaccine in at least 10,000 people could potentially give enough evidence of safety and efficacy to clear it for wider use. US late-stage vaccine trials launched so far aim to recruit up to 30,000 people.

FDA clears test for saliva testing

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) [authorized emergency use](#) of a new and inexpensive saliva test for COVID-19 that could greatly expand testing capacity. The new test, SalivaDirect, was developed by researchers at the Yale School of Public Health and allows saliva samples to be collected in any sterile container. It is a much less invasive process than the nasal swabs currently used to test for the virus that causes COVID-19, but one that has so far yielded highly sensitive and similar results. The test, which also avoids a key step that has caused shortages of chemical reagents used in other tests, can run approximately 90 samples in fewer than 3 hours in a lab, although the number can be greater in big labs with automation.

Record number of influenza flu doses produced ahead of expected COVID-19 resurgence

Global influenza vaccine makers have produced a record number of doses for the coming flu season, as authorities try to ease the burden on hospitals ahead of an expected COVID-19 resurgence, says [Agence France-Presse](#). In the US, pharmaceutical companies plan to make around 196 million doses to serve the population of 330 million, according to the CDC. That is up from 175 million last year, an 11% increase. Major pharmacy chain CVS, which administers flu vaccines without a prescription, is ordering 18 million doses, double the amount in 2019.

Large study suggests convalescent plasma can help treat COVID-19, but experts have doubts

Infusing hospitalized COVID-19 patients with blood plasma from people who have recovered from the disease appeared to show a benefit in a nationwide study, but the study's lack of a placebo group left several experts struggling to interpret the data, [says STAT](#). The study, which enrolled more than 35,000 patients, found that quickly administering so-called convalescent plasma had a marked effect on mortality for patients with severe cases of COVID-19. Those who received transfusions within 3 days of diagnosis had a 7-day death rate of 8.7%, while patients who got plasma after 4 or more days had a mortality rate of 11.9%. The difference met the standard for statistical significance, but without a placebo group for comparison, it's unclear just how valuable the treatment might be.

Newsorthy

9 COVID-19 myths that just won't go away

As the world continues to battle the coronavirus, it is also fighting a different sort of epidemic: misinformation. This "infodemic" is just as harmful as COVID-19 itself, leading people to downplay the severity of the disease and ignore public health advice in

favour of unproved treatments or “cures.” A recent survey by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and Gallup found that 4 in 5 Americans say the online spread of misinformation is the biggest problem facing the media. Even with widely available evidence to the contrary, beliefs are hard to change. [Scientific American](#) addresses the most insidious falsehoods about the pandemic, and why they are wrong.

This weekly COVID-19 update is compiled by the Canadian Pharmacists Association. To unsubscribe, please reply to this email with “Unsubscribe” in the subject line.

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