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Sent: December 16, 2020 2:53 PM
Subject: The Weekly: CPhA's COVID-19 Update for December 16



December 16, 2020

****NOTE: The Weekly will be taking a holiday hiatus and will not be published on December 23 or December 30. The next issue will be published on January 6, 2021.****

CPhA

TODAY: Pharmacy Appreciation Virtual Town Hall

The Hon. Patty Hajdu, Minister of Health, would like to take the opportunity to thank the pharmacy community for the incredible work that pharmacists and pharmacy staff have undertaken throughout the pandemic, particularly during this year's extraordinary flu season. We invite all pharmacy staff to join us on **Wednesday, December 16 at 4:00pm ET** when the minister will be joined by Chief Public Health Officer Theresa Tam and MP for Kitchener Centre and pharmacist Raj Saini, to highlight these critical efforts and to answer some questions from the community. [Registration is free and is now open.](#)

TOMORROW: Pharmacy's pandemic response: Reflections on future pandemic planning

On **Thursday, December 17, from 3:00-4:30pm ET**, join our panel of experts for the final session of CPhA's Virtually Together webinar series, [Pharmacy's pandemic response: Reflections on future pandemic planning](#). Canada's most accessible health care providers, pharmacists, kept their doors open and continued to provide essential medication management care to Canadians while other providers closed. This session will highlight some of the challenges the community has faced throughout the pandemic and some of the key strategies and considerations in achieving patient continuity of care, safeguarding medication supply and optimizing workflow to protect staff and patients. It is essential to incorporate early lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic to help pharmacists be better prepared for the future. This session is free and is accredited for 1.5 CEUs. [Registration is now open.](#)

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

Provincial

More companies are offering COVID-19 tests for a fee

Travellers who want to leave the country for a destination that requires they are COVID-free will now have to pay anywhere from \$50 to \$250 for a test, depending on the company, [the Star says](#). The province stopped covering the test for asymptomatic travellers in the latest change to Ontario's private COVID-19 testing. Shoppers Drug Mart, which has been doing the free government testing for asymptomatic people who meet certain criteria since September, is now charging \$199 for the travel test. A negative result is an entry requirement for some countries that allow Canadians to visit.

National

Canadian Pharmacist of the Year calls Pfizer vaccine a 'light in the darkness'

Dr. Kelly Grindrod, Professor in Pharmacy at the University of Waterloo and Canada's Pharmacist of the Year for 2020, calls the

[news of the Pfizer vaccine approval](#) a “light in the darkness of what we’ve been living through,” adding that she was impressed by how fast the vaccine was developed and how effective it’s touted to be. While rapid development may leave some leery about the vaccine’s safety, Grindrod said that sort of reaction makes sense. “The good news is... what we’ve seen from these trials is that they’re being relatively transparent...” said Grindrod. “The FDA released the documents on this Pfizer vaccine a few days ago... It’s the first time we’ve seen a full chart on the side-effects after the first dose, side effects from the placebo after the first dose, side effects from the second dose – and you do see that people get side effects with this vaccine.”

Canada administers its first COVID-19 vaccine shots

Canada’s national vaccination campaign to stop the spread of COVID-19 began with joy and relief on Monday, while challenges facing the mass inoculation plan rose to the surface as hundreds of Quebec nursing-home workers passed on the shot for now, [reports the Globe and Mail](#). Gisèle Levesque, an 89-year-old resident of a Quebec City nursing home, did not flinch as she received her needle in the arm at 11:25 a.m. A short time later and about 250km to the southwest, Gloria Lallouz, 78, received her dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine at a nursing home on the west side of Montreal. Anita Quidangen, a Toronto personal support worker who has worked with seniors since 1988, received the vaccine just after noon.

Webinar: Recommendations of NACI on the use of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine

The National Collaborating Centre for Infectious Diseases, PHAC and Health Canada are presenting a [webinar](#) on Friday, December 18, from 12:30pm – 1:00pm EST on what health care providers need to know about the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, including vaccine characteristics, storage, handling and administrative requirements. There will be a live Q&A with the presenters following the presentations. The [French session](#) will take place on Wednesday, December 16 at 3:00pm.

Canada expected to receive 168,000 doses of Moderna vaccine by month’s end, Trudeau says

On December 15 Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced that the promising COVID-19 vaccine candidate from Massachusetts-based Moderna will be available in Canada by the end of the month if the shot secures the necessary regulatory approvals, [says CBC](#). Health Canada regulators are in the final stages of the review process for this vaccine. A final decision on authorization could come as early as this week. If it’s approved, Trudeau said, Canada will receive up to 168,000 doses of the two-dose Moderna vaccine before the end of December. Trudeau said deliveries are slated to begin within 48 hours of Health Canada’s authorization.

Canada pledges \$485 million in COVID-19 aid for other nations

Canada will spend \$485 million to support COVID-19 tests, treatments and vaccines in low- and middle-income countries, including antibody treatments, [Reuters reports](#). The country has reserved enough COVID-19 doses to vaccinate its population several times over. Funds will go to the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator, an initiative that was launched by the World Health Organization and its partners, as well as to other global health organizations, including UNICEF, the Pan American Health Organization, and GAVI, The Vaccine Alliance.

More Canadians willing to roll up their sleeves right away as national COVID-19 vaccine rollout begins

The latest [data from the Angus Reid Institute](#) indicate a notable increase in the number of Canadians who say they are willing to be immunized against COVID-19 as soon as vaccine is available to them. A month ago, 40% of Canadians said they were keen to be vaccinated ASAP as opposed to wanting to wait a while first. Today, half (48%) now want an immediate shot, a boost of 8 percentage points. Those 65 and over are among the most likely to say they’re eager to be immunized (61%). But while more in this country express a desire for inoculation sooner rather than later, the number of those who say they will not get a vaccine has remained static at roughly 1-in-7. This rate varies from province to province, making the task for public health officials in some places potentially more challenging than others.

International

England: All-Party Pharmacy Group warns of pressures on pharmacies

The All-Party Pharmacy Group has praised the heroic efforts of pharmacy teams delivering frontline care to patients during

COVID-19 and has warned of continued pressures facing community pharmacies, [reports the Pharmaceutical Journal](#). A new [inquiry report](#) from the group of MPs and peers, chaired by Jackie Doyle-Price, MP, includes a survey of 1600 pharmacy staff, with 95% of respondents saying their place of work was under financial pressure. The report makes a number of recommendations, including calling for a review of funding as well as increased training and resources to “supercharge” the pharmacy workforce to support patient care.

Pharmacy organizations welcome FDA authorization of COVID vaccine: “We stand ready to serve”

The leaders of 18 pharmacy organizations welcome the decision by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to authorize the emergency use of the first COVID-19 vaccine. “This is a historic moment in the nation’s effort to end the pandemic. The pharmacy profession is ready to do its part as qualified, active participants in administering these vaccines, [says a statement](#) from the American Pharmacists Association (APhA). “Pharmacists are the most accessible health care providers in the nation, with 90% of Americans living within 5 miles of pharmacy. Across the nation they stand ready, in all patient care settings, to administer the vaccine and counsel patients through this critical moment in our nation’s history. As trusted health professionals dedicated to serving the health care needs of our communities, we stand ready to serve.”

FDA staff raises no new concerns with Moderna’s coronavirus vaccine

US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) staff members did not raise new concerns over data for the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine in documents made public on December 15, preparing the way for authorization of a second, easier-to-handle shot, [Reuters notes](#). The FDA staff said the vaccine was effective without any specific safety issues in adults over the age of 18 in the documents prepared for a December 17 meeting of outside experts who will discuss whether to endorse a US emergency use authorization for the Moderna shot.

Sanofi suffers major setback in development of a COVID-19 vaccine

Sanofi has suffered a major setback in producing a COVID-19 vaccine, [STAT reports](#). The problem will push the timeline for deployment — if the vaccine is approved — from the first half of 2021 into the second half of the year. The news is also disappointing for multiple countries, including the US, as well as the European Union, that have purchase contracts. Sanofi had hoped to start a Phase 3 trial this month and projected it could produce 100 million doses of vaccine in 2020, and 1 billion doses in 2021.

AstraZeneca to work on COVID-19 vaccine combinations with Russia’s Sputnik V developers

AstraZeneca will soon start work with Russia’s Gamaleya Institute to investigate whether their 2 COVID-19 vaccine candidates can be successfully combined, [CNBC says](#). The Russian Direct Investment Fund, Russia’s sovereign wealth fund, which has funded development of the Sputnik V shot, said clinical trials of the combination would begin by the end of the month. Russia has claimed Sputnik V is over 90% effective in preventing people from contracting the virus, citing preliminary results from ongoing trials.

Over-the-counter home test for COVID-19 gets green light in US

The first home test for COVID-19 that doesn’t require a prescription will soon be on US store shelves, [says the Associated Press](#). US regulators authorized the rapid coronavirus test, which can be done entirely at home. The announcement by the FDA represents another important — though incremental — step in efforts to expand testing options. Regulators granted emergency use for a similar home test last month, but that one needs a doctor’s prescription. The agency’s action allows sales in places like drugstores “where a patient can buy it, swab their nose, run the test and find out their results in as little as 20 minutes,” said FDA Commissioner Stephen Hahn.

Fauci predicts US could see signs of herd immunity by late March or early April

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the US senior official for infectious diseases, predicts the United States could begin to achieve early stages of herd immunity against the deadly coronavirus by late spring or summer. And if that happens, Fauci anticipates, “we could really turn this thing around” toward the end of 2021. In an [interview with NPR](#), Fauci says, “I would say 50% would have to get

vaccinated before you start to see an impact. But I would say 75% to 85% would have to get vaccinated if you want to have that blanket of herd immunity.”

Poor countries face long wait for vaccines despite promises

With Americans, Britons and Canadians rolling up their sleeves to receive coronavirus vaccines, the route out of the pandemic now seems clear to many in the West, even if the rollout will take many months, [says the Associated Press](#). But for poorer countries, the road will be far longer and rougher. The ambitious initiative known as COVAX, created to ensure the entire world has access to COVID-19 vaccines, has secured only a fraction of the 2 billion doses it hopes to buy over the next year, has yet to confirm any actual deals to ship out vaccines and is short on cash.

Newsworthy

Why talking about getting vaccinated could help counter COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy

Experts say that since the COVID-19 vaccine, which began rolling out in Canada this week, may face an uphill battle gaining the confidence of Canadians, it will be important for those participating in trials or selected to be in the first cohort to get the vaccine to share their stories, [says CBC](#).

The polio vaccine had Elvis. Can celebrities similarly spur acceptance of the COVID-19 vaccine?

Celebrities and other influential people leveraging their star power to promote a medical product is nothing new in America, not even for vaccines. Elvis Presley famously rolled up his sleeves to receive the polio vaccine on national television in 1956. The quick needle jab into the King of Rock 'n' Roll's arm was among the most memorable moments from the robust teenager-led vaccine campaign. [STAT takes a look](#) at how celebrities could spur the acceptance of a COVID-19 vaccine.

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.

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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