

From: Public & Professional Affairs Department
Sent: December 2, 2020 4:47 PM
Subject: The Weekly: CPhA's COVID-19 Update for December 2



December 2, 2020

CPhA

Free webinar tomorrow: New horizons for pharmacists as public health stewards

The next session in CPhA's Virtually Together fall webinar series will highlight how pharmacists are building on their skills and capacity as immunizers and public health educators to provide COVID-19 testing and vaccine administration, both in Canada and globally. Join us on **Thursday, December 3** from **2:30-4:00pm ET** when our panel of experts will also touch on other ways that pharmacists can support public health and will explore barriers and facilitators to helping community pharmacists prepare for new horizons in public health. This webinar is accredited for 1.5 CEUs and is supported by an unrestricted educational grant from AbbVie. [Register here](#).

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

Provincial

Ontario government now in direct talks with COVID-19 vaccine manufacturers

Officials planning for the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines in Ontario are now speaking directly with the manufacturers of 7 different candidate vaccines as they prepare for what Health Minister Christine Elliott says will be "the largest logistical undertaking" the province has faced "in a generation," [says CTV](#). "We started speaking with vaccine manufacturers, including AstraZeneca, Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson, Jansen, Moderna, GSK and Sanofi. This is absolutely critical for planning," she said. "We are also working with distribution experts like McKesson and Shoppers Drug Mart who not only have the warehouse capacity for vaccines like this but also know how to get these vaccines to their networks, including hospitals and other frontline care providers."

Quebec ready to deploy combined flu and COVID-19 tests

Quebecers will be able to get tested for COVID-19, flu and another respiratory infection with a single swab at some testing centres this winter, [reports the Montreal Gazette](#). The Quebec health department has confirmed that testing centres across the province are preparing to use new multiplex tests that simultaneously detect different pathogens, including SARS-CoV-2, influenza A and B and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). Some of the combination tests can detect all three viruses, while others can detect the first, which causes COVID-19, and influenza A and B. A combination test could be offered by any type of clinic, including COVID-19 testing centres and hospitals.

National

Feds, provinces agree vaccine prioritization should be consistent across Canada

As the precise order of who will follow seniors, health care workers and high-risk populations in line to get COVID-19 vaccines is still being sorted out, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau says that the federal and provincial governments agree that there should be a cross-Canada "consensus" on the matter, [according to CTV](#). With Health Canada now beginning its assessment of a fourth

potential vaccine candidate — Johnson & Johnson's — the prime minister said talks are ongoing with the provinces and territories about the “challenging ethical and societal” aspect of the country's vaccine rollout. Logistics aside, governments and health care experts are having to weigh and decide who will be prioritized and what the eventual order of precedence will be for Canadians to line up and be vaccinated.

Vaccine advisory committee recommends new ranked roll-out, with long-term care at top

Canada's vaccine advisory committee is now recommending people living in long-term care, assisted living, retirement homes and chronic care hospitals be vaccinated for COVID-19 first, along with the people who take care of them. The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) first issued [preliminary guidelines](#) in early November. They included general categories of “key populations” who should get the vaccine first, but no ranked system of who among those should top the list. Committee chair Dr. Caroline Quach-Thanh [tells Global News](#) that once NACI learned Canada would be getting even fewer doses of the vaccine than expected in the first round — 6 million, enough for 3 million people with 2 doses required — it “had no choice” but to recommend a ranked system.

Trudeau says vaccines will roll out “as quickly as possible” after Health Canada approvals

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau sought to reassure the country on December 1 that his government will be ready to deploy shots soon after they receive the necessary Health Canada approvals, [says CBC](#). Trudeau said that the independent scientists reviewing the clinical trial data submitted by the manufacturers behind 4 promising vaccine candidates are working hard to ensure the safety of these products before Ottawa starts shipments. With recent polls showing that a sizeable number of Canadians will refuse a vaccine altogether, or will wait some time before lining up for a shot, Trudeau said he wants Canadians to be assured that the science will not be rushed and Canada's regulators will only approve a product that works. “In this COVID-19 pandemic, keeping Canadians safe means getting a vaccine as quickly as possible, but it also means making sure that the vaccine is safe for Canadians,” Trudeau said. Once the regulator gives the green light to one of those vaccines, Canada will mobilize its public health infrastructure to deploy it to the provinces and territories.

Canada “not at the back of the line” for COVID-19 vaccine, Moderna chairman says

The head of a US biotechnology company developing one of the most promising COVID-19 vaccine candidates says Canada is not far behind other countries on receiving doses of its vaccine, despite criticism of the government's procurement plan from the Conservative opposition. “Canada is not at the back of the line,” Noubar Afeyan, co-founder and chairman of Moderna, [told CBC](#) on November 29. Afeyan said that because Canada was among the first countries to make a pre-order with Moderna, the country is guaranteed to receive a certain portion of the company's initial batch of doses as long as the vaccine proves safe and effective and is given regulatory approval.

Health Canada considers fourth COVID vaccine

Federal Health Minister Patty Hajdu says Johnson & Johnson has submitted its COVID-19 vaccine candidate for Health Canada's approval, [reports the Canadian Press](#). It's the fourth potential vaccine sent for assessment in Canada and the first that would require 1 dose to confer immunity instead of 2. Health Canada has been examining vaccine candidates from Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca since October when those companies sent partial data on their drugs for what's called a “rolling review.” If the Johnson & Johnson vaccine meets Health Canada's standards for safety and effectiveness, the Canadian government says it has a deal to buy 10 million doses and an option on up to 28 million more.

Canadians not worried other countries will get COVID-19 vaccine first: poll

A new poll suggests most Canadians aren't currently worried that people in other countries might get a COVID-19 vaccine first, [says the Toronto Star](#). Results of a survey conducted by Léger and the Association for Canadian Studies show that 37% of respondents are very concerned that Canada may not receive doses of a new COVID vaccine as early as the United States. “That's not necessarily low, but I think most pundits would have expected this number to be much higher,” said Léger executive vice-president Christian Bourque. Meanwhile, 48% say they are not concerned about getting a vaccine first and 10% say they don't care at all or are not planning to get vaccinated anyway.

PM turns to the military to help with COVID-19 vaccine distribution

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced that the federal government has chosen a senior military commander to lead its COVID-19 vaccine distribution effort as the country prepares for a massive inoculation campaign, [says CBC](#). Trudeau said Maj.-Gen. Dany Fortin, the current chief of staff to the Canadian Joint Operations Command and a former commander of the NATO mission in Iraq, will head up vaccine logistics and operations within a new branch of the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC). “Canada is well prepared for large-scale rollouts of vaccines, but this will be the biggest immunization in the history of the country. We must reach everyone who wants a vaccine, no matter where they live,” Trudeau said.

Air Canada, Shoppers Drug Mart offering pre-flight rapid COVID-19 tests for international passengers

Air Canada passengers looking to travel over the holidays can now get a pre-departure rapid COVID-19 test at Shoppers Drug Mart stores in Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver, [reports CTV](#). The airline has announced a partnership with Shoppers Drug Mart for Air Canada customers to receive a COVID-19 RT-PCR test in order to comply with international travel requirements. Air Canada says the test will be available for travellers flying to destinations requiring a negative COVID-19 test, including Hawaii, the Bahamas, Turks and Caicos, Antigua, Barbuda and St. Lucia.

Survey shows support for mandatory COVID-19 vaccine keeps falling even as cases spike

Support among Canadians for mandatory vaccination against COVID-19 continues to fall even as new infections explode across the country and public health officials urge people to stay at home. Polling done by Ipsos for [Global News](#) shows a drop in support for a mandatory vaccine [since the beginning of the month](#), when it stood at 61%. That support now stands at 59%, a total drop of 13 percentage points [since May 2020](#). “We know when we start going through the concerns that people have, they’re very worried about anything that has been rushed or they might perceive has been rushed. They’re very worried about anything that might have side effects associated with it,” said Darrell Bricker, CEO of Ipsos Public Affairs.

International

COVID-19: Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine approved for use next week in UK

The UK has become the first country in the world to approve the Pfizer/BioNTech coronavirus vaccine, paving the way for mass vaccination, [reports the BBC](#). Britain’s medicines regulator, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), says the shot, which offers up to 95% protection against COVID-19, is safe to be rolled out. The first 800,000 doses will be available in the UK from next week, said health secretary Matt Hancock. Elderly people in care homes and care home staff are at the top of the priority list, followed by over-80s and health and care staff. But because the Pfizer vaccine needs to be stored at -70°C, the very first vaccinations are likely to take place at hospitals so care home residents may not be immunized until later.

Safety of pharmacy staff and patients paramount to the COVID-19 vaccine program

Following the news that the MHRA has approved the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for rollout in the UK, the Royal Pharmaceutical Society is calling for the safety of pharmacy teams and their patients to be prioritized by ensuring that teams receive the vaccination at the same time as other health professionals. In [a statement on the pharmacists’ role in the vaccination program](#), the Society recognizes that any vaccination strategy must minimize disruption to routine practice across all sectors and ensure that patients can still access the medicines, services and health care they need, while utilizing the expertise and leadership of pharmacists from all sectors of the NHS to deliver the COVID-19 vaccination

NHS England to choose ‘selected’ number of pharmacies to deliver at least 1000 COVID-19 vaccines per week

In a letter to contractors on November 27, NHS England has said it plans to “commission selected community pharmacy contractors” to administer COVID-19 vaccines based on their ability to meet a specific set of requirements, [according to the Pharmaceutical Journal](#). Pharmacies designated as COVID-19 vaccination sites by NHS England will need to administer “at least 1000 vaccines each week” if they are to become part of the national vaccine delivery program. The letter further stated that NHS England is planning for designated pharmacy sites to be ready to administer COVID-19 vaccines under a local enhanced service (LES) beginning in late December 2020 or early January 2021.

Pharmacy integral to COVID vaccine distribution

The increasing number of companies reporting successful COVID-19 vaccine trials is encouraging, but also highlights the acute need for government plans to ensure maximum uptake of these vaccinations by the community. Now is the time to thoroughly plan distribution pathways and it is important that the pivotal role community pharmacy can play is recognized and built into all planning, [says the Pharmacy Guild of Australia](#). The Australian Government's Australian COVID-19 Vaccination Policy, endorsed by National Cabinet, acknowledges the role pharmacy can play in COVID-19 vaccination. Acknowledgment is a starting point, but real planning is essential.

Moderna to submit COVID-19 vaccine to FDA as full results show 94% efficacy

Moderna reported that its COVID-19 vaccine continued to deliver strong results, showing 94% efficacy in the main analysis of its key study and, as a result, the company will immediately seek regulatory clearances in the US and Europe, [STAT writes](#). The milestone suggests there could be 2 vaccines before the end of 2020. Pfizer and BioNTech released positive results for a similar vaccine on November 18, and requested an emergency use authorization from the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) 2 days later.

EU Commission to authorize COVID vaccines days after regulatory approval

The European Commission is likely to give final authorization for the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines days after the European Medicines Agency issues approvals, [Reuters says](#). The EMA plans to decide on whether to approve the vaccine being developed by Pfizer and BioNTech by December 29, and the shot being developed by Moderna by January 12. Under EU rules, EMA recommends the authorization of a drug or vaccine and the EU Commission authorizes them on the basis of EMA scientific advice.

Russia says India to produce 100 million doses of Sputnik vaccine

One of the developers of Russia's Sputnik V coronavirus vaccine announced on November 27 that India-based drug maker Hetero will produce more than 100 million doses of the vaccine, [says Aljazeera](#). "Hetero, one of India's leading generic pharmaceutical companies, have agreed to produce over 100 million doses per year of the world's first registered vaccine against the novel coronavirus infection – Sputnik V," the Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) said in a statement, adding that production was expected to start in early 2021. Last week, Russia said interim results from the Sputnik V clinical trials showed the vaccine was 95% effective, similar to other international vaccine makers that have also published test results showing efficacy rates of 90% and higher.

Health workers, long-term care facilities should get COVID-19 vaccine first: CDC

The committee that advises the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control voted overwhelmingly on December 1 to recommend that health care providers and residents and staff of long-term care facilities be at the front of the line for COVID-19 vaccine, [STAT says](#). The recommendation must still be accepted by CDC Director Robert Redfield. The agency will then issue its guidance on who should get priority access, though final decisions will rest with the states. State governments must put in their first orders of COVID vaccines to Operation Warp Speed, the US government's vaccine development fast-tracking program, by December 4. The vote was aimed at giving them concrete advice on who they should prioritize for vaccination with first deliveries, which are expected to be limited.

Newsworthy

Rapid tests for COVID-19 have been distributed across Canada. Why aren't some provinces using them?

The latest COVID-19 tests might be rapid, but Canada's uptake in using them has been anything but, [reports the Toronto Star](#). The federal government says it has procured 38 million rapid tests, and has so far shipped out about 5.5 million of them. Provinces have been hesitant to use them, indicating that they have concerns that the tests are not as accurate as the gold-standard, lab-based PCR test widely used across the country since the start of the pandemic. Some of the provinces aren't using them at all right now and others are wanting to study their use further.

Worth Repeating

“We already have a pretty good vaccine distribution supply chain in place for annual flu vaccination. Now we need to put that chain on steroids, and with military precision.” — The *Globe and Mail*'s Andre Picard on how [planning and not partisan sniping](#) will be the only way to get the COVID-19 vaccine into Canadians' arms.

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.