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CPhA

CPhA and other pharmacy organizations continue to push to administer COVID-19 vaccines through pharmacies

Pharmacists across Canada are urging provincial and territorial governments to consider using pharmacies to administer COVID-19 vaccines earlier in the rollout than the final stages, [reports Canadian Healthcare Network](#) (subscriber access only). “We are confident that pharmacists will be able to administer vaccines, particularly when we’re looking at the bigger mass campaigns that are in line for the spring once some of the targeted populations are vaccinated,” says Joelle Walker, vice-president of public affairs for the Canadian Pharmacists Association. Pharmacists and other health care professionals are expressing their eagerness to give the COVID-19 vaccine through the social media hashtag #readytovaccinate. The approval of the Moderna vaccine in Canada has increased calls to provide the vaccine in pharmacies, as it can be stored thawed in a refrigerator for up to 30 days.

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

Provincial

NL pharmacies and pharmacists key to supporting COVID-19 vaccination program

The Pharmacists’ Association of Newfoundland and Labrador (PANL) says that community pharmacy is a key solution to supporting effective, equitable and efficient COVID-19 vaccination at all stages of deployment, [says a news release](#). NL pharmacists, along with other health care providers, must be part of this significant undertaking to ensure the health and well-being of all residents. PANL recommends leveraging all possible immunizers in the vaccine rollout to ensure all residents are vaccinated as swiftly as possible; providing the necessary supplies for pharmacists to immunize residents; vaccinating pharmacists as essential front-line health care workers; and ensuring a vaccine administration fee reflects the added time and complexity of administration and education related to the COVID-19 vaccine.

PEI pharmacists in talks with Chief Public Health Office to give COVID-19 vaccine

The executive director of the PEI Pharmacists Association says there have been talks with public health officials around having pharmacists distribute and administer vaccines, [according to the CBC](#). Currently, all of PEI’s COVID-19 vaccines are going to that top-priority group and are being administered by public health nursing staff. “Once those people are done with this vaccine, the plan, as we move out to generalized immunization through the next stage of [the] immunization process, pharmacists would be involved in making sure that we get as many people vaccinated as possible,” said association executive director Erin MacKenzie. That would make vaccines more accessible and convenient, she added, as well as contributing to “a swifter delivery based on the fact that we would have potentially 170 pharmacists able to join the fight in getting people vaccinated.”

Manitoba pharmacies hope to offer COVID-19 vaccine

Pharmacists in Manitoba hope to offer vaccines in their clinics and pharmacies, [says the CBC](#). The US recently announced its

plans to give COVID-19 vaccines to high-risk groups through pharmacies, and pharmacists in Manitoba are eager to do the same, says Tim Smith, external relations chair with Pharmacists Manitoba. “Pharmacists are absolutely ready to participate in getting vaccines in arms,” he says, adding that this year pharmacists administered half of the flu vaccine doses in the province. “We’re part of the public health strategy and we’re absolutely ready to help put an end to COVID-19.” Pharmacists already have a “robust distribution system” with the ability to book appointments, administer the vaccine safely and follow-up with patients to give them their second doses.

SK pharmacists looking for more details on vaccine plan

Pharmacists in Saskatchewan are ready and able to start giving COVID-19 vaccines, according to the Pharmacy Association of Saskatchewan (PAS). Now they’re just waiting to find out where they fit into the province’s vaccination plan, [reports CKOM Radio](#). Dawn Martin, CEO of PAS, says that the province has been consulting with the association, but she still hasn’t heard much in the way of details on the plan. “We’re hoping to hear fairly shortly what the plan is for utilizing pharmacists fully in the whole system and the plan for getting the pandemic under control.” Martin believes pharmacists will be an integral part of the vaccination plan when eligibility opens up, especially in rural areas where there may not be many options for getting a vaccination. Since pharmacists have been able administer immunizations like flu shots, most if not all have the freezers necessary to store vaccines like Moderna, which don’t have to be kept quite as cold.

COVID-19 vaccines expected to arrive in BC pharmacies in March or April

Greater Victoria pharmacies have been inundated with questions about how to get the COVID-19 vaccine, and they say the vaccine should start to arrive by spring, [reports CHEK-TV](#). “Sounds like in March or April the COVID-19 vaccines will become available to more of the general population, and becoming available to pharmacies is going to be a huge game-changer,” says Lindsay Dixon, a pharmacist at Heart Pharmacy. The BC Pharmacy Association is coordinating the effort with local health authorities and the province.

National

20M additional COVID-19 vaccine doses secured from Pfizer

Canada has reached an agreement to purchase another 20 million doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, [according to the CBC](#). That doubles the number of doses the country has locked in from the US pharmaceutical giant and brings the total number scheduled to arrive this year from 2 approved vaccine makers to 80 million — enough to vaccinate the entire Canadian population according to the required 2-dose regimen. “From our agreements with Pfizer and Moderna alone... we are on track to have every Canadian who wants a vaccine receive one by September,” Prime Minister Trudeau said at a press conference outside Rideau Cottage.

Blood kits sent to 48,000 Canadians to survey extent of COVID-19

Statistics Canada is mailing pinprick blood tests to 48,000 Canadians to gauge the virus’ prevalence in the country. In what is one of the first large-scale surveys of its kind in Canada, researchers are examining the blood samples for antibodies pertaining to the virus that causes COVID-19. “While this is a voluntary survey, your participation is important as your contribution will play an important part in understanding past infections by measuring the prevalence of COVID-19 antibodies amongst Canadians, including those who have never had symptoms,” [Statistics Canada explained in a brochure](#).

Deloitte to track Canada’s COVID-19 vaccination efforts

The federal government has awarded a \$16-million contract to accounting firm Deloitte to “manage vaccine rollout, administration and reporting,” [reports the Globe and Mail](#). In December, Ottawa sent out a request for proposals from a shortlist of suppliers, asking for a system that could track doses en route from their manufacturer, manage their storage conditions, and monitor possible, albeit rare, adverse reactions. The government did not provide a date as to when the new system would be online. Ottawa, in the original request for proposals, hoped that a “minimum viable product” would be online “during January 2021, or a modified date to be mutually agreed.”

Health Canada–approved COVID-19 treatment drug rejected by British Columbia

A drug approved by Health Canada to treat COVID-19 is not being used in BC because health officials in the province say data are lacking, [the Vancouver Sun says](#). The drug — bamlanivimab — is made by Eli Lilly using technology from AbCellera Biologics. But the drug “has little published evidence of clinical benefit and very limited safety data,” a BC Ministry of Health spokesperson explained. “Should further evidence become available that more strongly supports clinical benefit, the (drug) will be reassessed.”

Most Canadians say they will take the COVID-19 vaccine when available

Most Canadians will take the COVID-19 vaccine when it is available to them, [according to a new poll](#) conducted by Nanos Research and commissioned for the *Globe and Mail*. Results of the poll found that 68% of Canadians surveyed will definitely take the vaccine, while 19% said they will probably get the shot. Canadians over 55 were more likely to say they will definitely take the vaccine, at 80%, compared with those who are 18 to 34, at 58%. The COVID-19 vaccine and its rollout across the country are the current preoccupations of policymakers who have been criticized for the speed of distribution amid soaring case numbers and a rising death toll.

International

Plans for ‘wider involvement’ of pharmacies in vaccinations

Plans are underway to look at how more pharmacies in England can be involved in the COVID-19 vaccination program, the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee (PSNC) has said, adding that it hoped to share details “very soon,” [according to Pharmacy Magazine](#). The negotiator said on January 10 that community pharmacy bodies have sat down with the Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England & NHS Improvement and that there was general agreement “on the benefits of using more community pharmacies in the national vaccination effort.” Prime Minister Boris Johnson has said around 200 pharmacies have been designated as vaccination sites and may begin operations starting January 10, but concerns have been raised in recent days that the wider pharmacy network is not being utilized.

Faced with increasing risk, pharmacists demand information about vaccine rollout

The [Irish Pharmacy Union \(IPU\) says](#) it is essential that the staff of Ireland’s more than 1800 community pharmacies are vaccinated in the earliest phases of the COVID-19 vaccine rollout. Secretary General of the IPU Darragh O’Loughlin says, “Frontline health care workers are listed as one of the very top tiers of the government’s vaccine allocation plan. Rollout of the vaccine has already started in hospitals and we have seen numerous images of hospital staff and doctors being vaccinated, which is very positive. However, pharmacies receive over 1 million visits each week from patients, many of whom are immunocompromised or have serious underlying conditions, and pharmacists still have no information about how, when and where they might receive the vaccine.”

Australian community pharmacies set to play vital role in COVID-19 rollout

Australia’s 5800 community pharmacies are [set to play a vital role](#) in the vaccination of the Australian population against COVID-19. The national president of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, George Tambassis, says talks with the Federal Health Minister, Greg Hunt, have confirmed the essential contribution of community pharmacies to the COVID vaccination efforts. “Make no mistake — this is the biggest public health challenge Australia has ever faced, and community pharmacies are an essential component in this enormous logistical exercise,” Tambassis says. Community pharmacists will be vaccinating patients from Phase 2a of the national vaccine rollout strategy, giving millions of Australians the option of having their vaccination at their local pharmacy. Pharmacists and pharmacy assistants will be vaccinated as part of Phase 1b, recognizing their essential role as health care workers.

Patient safety cited in Australia turf war

Lobbying by doctor groups against the proposed role of community pharmacists in Australia’s COVID-19 vaccine program has continued into the new year, while other countries are already utilizing their pharmacy networks to bolster immunization efforts, [says the Australian Journal of Pharmacy](#). With the impending rollout of a vaccine – scheduled for mid-to-late February

according to an announcement by Prime Minister Scott Morrison – doctor groups are ramping up criticism against community pharmacy’s potential role. Melbourne community pharmacist Anthony Tassone, president of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia’s Victorian branch, says the ongoing debate is “a waste of everybody’s time ... Another year, another swathe of disparaging remarks from the medical profession of the important role that community pharmacy and pharmacist immunizers can play in the accessibility of the COVID-19 vaccine for the Australian public,” he says.

Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine can be up to 80% effective with a delay between doses

The COVID-19 vaccine developed by the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca can be 80% effective when there are 3 months between shots, but there is insufficient evidence to back a regime involving a half-dose, [Reuters writes](#), citing a UK official. “Effectiveness was high, up to 80%, when there was a 3-month interval between first and second doses, which is the reason for our recommendation,” says Munir Pirmohamed, who chairs the Commission on Human Medicines Expert Working Group on COVID-19 vaccines.

Moderna says COVID-19 vaccine immunity to stay at least a year

Immunity from COVID-19 from Moderna Inc.’s vaccine should last at least a year, the company said this week at a health care conference, [reports Reuters](#). The drugmaker said it is confident that the messenger RNA (mRNA) technology it uses is well-suited to deploy a vaccine based on the new variant of the coronavirus that has emerged in a handful of countries. The company’s vaccine, mRNA-1273, uses synthetic mRNA to mimic the surface of the coronavirus and teach the immune system to recognize and neutralize it. Moderna said in December it would run tests to confirm the vaccine’s activity against any strain.

Newsworthy

How one of America’s poorest and most rural states became a leader in rolling out the COVID-19 vaccine

“West Virginia delivered, and offered, a COVID-19 vaccine to every single person in long-term care homes.” As David Clement [writes in the Financial Post](#), the key to the success was partnering with hundreds of pharmacies, both independent and chain, to deliver and administer the vaccines. Pharmacies with sufficient cold storage and backup generators were mobilized in a hub-and-spoke model that tasked each pharmacy with ensuring local long-term care vaccinations. This, alongside the state’s not getting too bureaucratic about its priority schedule, helped these pharmacies take only 2 weeks to give every single long-term care resident their first dose of the vaccine. This hub-and-spoke model, coupled with the less rigid priority schedule, allowed for the state to be far more dynamic, which is why the rollout was 50% quicker than originally planned.

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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