

**From:** Public & Professional Affairs Department  
**Sent:** January 6, 2021 2:41 PM  
**Subject:** The Weekly: CPhA's COVID-19 Update for January 6, 2021



**January 6, 2021**

## **CPhA**

### ***Pharmacy associations pressing governments for pharmacist role in COVID-19 vaccinations***

As provinces and territories begin the daunting process of immunizing residents against COVID-19, pharmacists are hoping and expecting to play a part in the massive rollout over the next months, says [Canadian Healthcare Network](#) (subscriber access required). CPhA and the Neighbourhood Pharmacy Association of Canada are advocating for governments to harness the ability of thousands of community pharmacists across the country to administer the vaccine. In December, the 2 national pharmacy associations [released a report](#) explaining why pharmacists are ideally positioned to participate in the vaccine rollout. The document also provides recommendations for government to include pharmacy associations and pharmacy groups in all planning and coordination efforts.

### ***Flu almost non-existent this year as COVID-19 cases rise across Canada***

Fears of a “twindemic” have not materialized this year, with hardly any cases of the flu in Canada this season, while COVID-19 cases continue to rise across the country, reports [the Canadian Press](#). Dr. Shelita Dattani, senior director of professional affairs at the Canadian Pharmacists Association, says physical distancing and mask rules aimed at slowing the spread of COVID-19 have limited cases of the flu dramatically. With flu season now past its peak, Dattani doesn’t expect numbers to jump in January and February. “The efforts that we’re taking to reduce the spread of COVID-19 are working ... people are masking and distancing and staying away from each other and using hand hygiene, so I think all of these efforts combined are contributing to lower rates,” she says.

### ***REMINDER: Virtually Together: New horizons for pharmacists as public health stewards recording available***

CPhA’s Virtually Together webinar New horizons for pharmacists as public health stewards highlights 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. The recording is available [here](#).

CPhA’s COVID-19 web pages are being updated regularly at [www.pharmacists.ca/covid19](http://www.pharmacists.ca/covid19) and [www.pharmacists.ca/covid19fr](http://www.pharmacists.ca/covid19fr).

## **National**

### ***Pharmacies push to join COVID-19 vaccination effort as distribution ramps up***

Pharmacies are pushing to get involved in Canada's vaccination effort, pitching their expansive networks and experience with vaccine distribution as potential selling points says [the Canadian Press](#). Nationwide chains Shoppers Drug Mart and London Drugs say they have had conversations with the federal and provincial governments about cooperating on vaccine distribution once the doses become more widely available, although there are currently no plans to do so. Consumers may ultimately prefer receiving their shot at a nearby pharmacy instead of a larger clinic, says Kelly Grindrod, a professor at the University of

Waterloo's school of pharmacy. Pharmacies have become the default option for many people looking to get vaccines, Grindrod says, a shift from a decade ago, when people mostly got them at doctors' offices.

### ***Canada's strained health system faces struggle to inoculate millions against COVID-19***

While the start of Canada's COVID-19 vaccination efforts has been slowed by a limited supply, a much larger challenge awaits as provinces plan to inoculate millions of people in the coming months: who will administer those shots, asks the [Globe and Mail](#). Provincial governments and local health authorities are expanding vaccination clinics in hospitals and other health care facilities, planning to launch mobile vaccination sites, and eventually will be leaning on family doctors and pharmacies to administer the shots. Kelly Grindrod, a professor at the University of Waterloo's school of pharmacy, says bringing community pharmacies and family physicians into the vaccination system quickly could alleviate some of the staffing challenges. Grindrod says it would also make it easier for people to get vaccines where they live. "Hospitals are only going to be able to take on so much capacity to vaccinate people because they're already dealing with the actual effects of COVID," she says. "There are 40,000 pharmacists in Canada and a similar number of family doctors. There are so many nurses. We actually have an enormous work force."

### ***PM says he's 'frustrated' with the pace of vaccine rollout***

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau says he's troubled by the slow pace of the COVID-19 vaccine rollout and is vowing to raise the lacklustre vaccination numbers with premiers during a conference call later this week, [says CBC](#). Canada already has received more than 424,050 doses of the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines — but only 35% of those doses have been administered by the provinces, with roughly 148,000 Canadians having received a shot so far. Ontario's vaccination program has been particularly slow: just 50,000 doses have been administered in the province since the inoculation campaign began on December 15. If the province continues to administer an average of just 2,500 shots a day, it will take over a decade to vaccinate all adults in the province.

### ***Public Health Agency of Canada COVID-19 vaccine webinars for health care providers***

As COVID-19 vaccine candidates are authorized for use in Canada, a summary of recommendations of the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) on the use of each vaccine was presented during several webinars in December. [Two webinars are currently available](#): Recommendations of NACI on the use of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine and Recommendations of NACI on the use of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine.

## **International**

### ***Let pharmacy chains vaccinate the general public now, former FDA commissioner urges***

Large retail pharmacy chains like CVS and Walgreens should be allowed to give COVID-19 vaccines to the general public now to help speed up the vaccination campaign and improve public health, former FDA commissioner Scott Gottlieb, MD, wrote in an opinion column published in the [Wall Street Journal](#) (subscriber access required). "The best option may be to rely more on private industry. National pharmacy chains like CVS and Walgreens have an agreement with the federal government to provide vaccines to long-term care facilities. The government should expand this program to help vaccinate all Americans," Dr. Gottlieb wrote. The major pharmacy chains combined could deliver up to 100 million vaccines per month. By allowing them to deliver vaccines to the general public now, public health agencies can focus resources on giving access to people in hard-to-reach communities, he added.

### ***Pharmacies' offer to speed up COVID-19 vaccine effort snubbed by ministers***

With the goal of vaccinating 13 million people by mid-February, community pharmacists in England are wondering why they are not being recruited to help achieve PM Boris Johnson's target, [according to the Mirror](#). Only a small number of pharmacists have been recruited, mainly at GP-led clinics. The majority who run 14,000 community pharmacies are not being utilized so far. Sandra Gidley, Royal Pharmaceutical Society president, says: "Community pharmacists already provide flu and travel vaccinations ... The NHS has a ready-made workforce of skilled vaccinators who should play their part. The local pharmacist might be the easiest healthcare setting for people to get to." Dr. Leyla Hannbeck, chief executive of the Association of Independent Multiple Pharmacies, says: "Some of the vulnerable will need to travel long distances to get the vaccine, when they

could have it in their local community. We are baffled by how community pharmacies have not yet been utilised.”

### **Community pharmacy-led vaccination sites to start administering COVID-19 vaccines**

COVID-19 vaccination sites led by community pharmacies will start administering vaccines to patients in England beginning the week of January 11, [says the Pharmaceutical Journal](#). A spokesperson for Boots said that it will initially open 3 COVID-19 vaccination sites, based in Halifax, Huddersfield and Gloucester. “We stand ready to do much more and our national network of pharmacy expertise is prepped to support the NHS and the government to accelerate the rollout of the vaccine,” said the spokesperson.

### **Pharmacist arrested, accused of destroying more than 500 Moderna vaccine doses**

A Milwaukee, Wis., pharmacist was arrested on December 31 and accused of “tampering with and causing the destruction” of more than 500 doses of the Moderna vaccine against COVID-19, [reports NPR](#). In a statement, Grafton Police Department officials said the pharmacist — now fired from the Advocate Aurora Health hospital system — was arrested on recommended charges of first-degree recklessly endangering safety, adulterating a prescription drug and criminal damage to property. Officials said that in a written statement to Aurora Health public safety officials, the pharmacist responsible admitted “to intentionally removing the vaccine knowing that if not properly stored the vaccine would be ineffective.”

### **ASHP reaction to arrest of Wisconsin pharmacist on vaccine tampering charges**

Following the arrest of the Wisconsin pharmacist accused of tampering with more than 500 doses of the Moderna vaccine, the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) [released a statement](#) to reiterate that “any purposeful act that may potentially harm patients by an individual member of one of the most trusted professions is unacceptable ... ASHP wants to assure the public that alleged cases such as the one recently reported are isolated and rare. The public can and should continue to trust pharmacists and all other healthcare professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.” ASHP represents over 58,000 pharmacists, student pharmacists, and pharmacy technicians who work in hospitals and health systems.

### **Why Israel is leading the world with COVID-19 vaccinations**

The reasons Israel been able to vaccinate its populations so quickly are multifaceted, [reports CBC](#), and there may be lessons that Canada itself can learn, some experts say. Israel leads in vaccinations per 100 people and is in the top 5 among total amount of doses given. “I think it's remarkable watching how organized Israel is in terms of getting access to a tremendous amount of vaccines and mobilizing vaccine rollout in a very expedited manner,” says Dr. Isaac Bogoch, an infectious diseases physician and member of the Ontario government's vaccine distribution task force.

### **UK ramps up inoculations with Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine**

Britain took another giant step in the fight against COVID-19, ramping up its immunization program by giving the first shots in the world from the vaccine created by Oxford University and pharmaceutical giant AstraZeneca, [says the Associated Press](#), in an article about Britain’s lockdown. Since early December, Britain's National Health Service has been using a vaccine made by Pfizer and the German firm BioNTech to inoculate health care workers and nursing home residents and staff. The Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine boosts that arsenal and is cheaper and easier to use since it does not require the super-cold storage needed by the Pfizer vaccine.

### **US may cut some Moderna vaccine doses in half to speed rollout, official says**

The US government is considering giving some people half the dose of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine in order to speed vaccinations, [Reuters says](#). Officials are in talks with Moderna and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) about stretching supplies of the vaccine, which requires 2 shots. “We know that for the Moderna vaccine, giving half of the dose to people between the ages of 18 and 55, two doses, half the dose ... means exactly achieving the objective of immunizing double the number of people with the doses we have,” says Moncef Slaoui, who heads Operation Warp Speed.

### **FDA warns health officials not to mess with COVID-19 vaccine doses schedule**

The FDA is [warning](#) health care workers that any changes to the authorized dosing schedules of COVID-19 vaccines currently being administered would significantly place public health at risk and undermine “the historic vaccination effort to protect the population” from the coronavirus pandemic, [NPR says](#). The FDA reacted to suggestions that the number of limited doses could be stretched by cutting them in half, extending the length of time between doses, or mixing and matching vaccines to immunize more people.

## **Newsorthy**

### ***All about the COVID-19 variant in Canada***

Health officials in several provinces have announced cases of the new COVID-19 variant first detected in the United Kingdom. Scientists say there is no evidence that COVID-19 vaccines currently being deployed — including those approved for use in Canada — will not protect against this variant. According to this [CBC report](#), here is what you should know about the new variant.

## **Worth Repeating**

“If we’re going to treat pandemic patients 24/7, we should be doing pandemic prevention in the form of vaccination 24/7 as well. Yet, public health, which usually oversees mass vaccine campaigns, has been inexplicably sidelined; so too have pharmacists, paramedics and family doctors.” – The *Globe and Mail*’s André Picard says [now is the time](#) to get all hands on deck in rolling out the COVID-19 vaccines across the country.

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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