



Canadian Pharmacists Association
Association des pharmaciens du Canada

The Weekly

Bringing the world of pharmacy together

July 14, 2021

CPhA

Pharmacy involvement in COVID-19 vaccination map

Pharmacy teams across Canada have now administered more than 6.5 million COVID-19 vaccine doses! As vaccination rollouts continue, CPhA is maintaining our Pharmacy Involvement in COVID Vaccination map, staying on top of the role pharmacists are playing in the vaccination effort. The graphic is available in [English](#) and [French](#).

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

Pharmacy on the front line

Pharmacy student named to Canadian Para triathlon team for Tokyo Paralympics

Kamylle Frenette was named to Canada's Para triathlon team on July 12 for the Tokyo Paralympic Games, [reports Saltwire.com](#). The Dieppe, NB, native, who trains out of Halifax, will compete in the women's PTS5 event. Frenette has a club foot and has been competing in triathlons for 10 years. She made her international debut for Canada in 2018. A biology graduate from Université de Moncton, Frenette is in her third year of the pharmacy program at Dalhousie University in Halifax. In an [interview with the Globe and Mail](#), she spoke about how she wants to become a certified vaccinator, hoping to help in Canada's immunization efforts against COVID-19. "I want to jump in and do my part in helping Nova Scotia and Canada to get past this," Frenette said.

Provincial

Alberta pharmacists administer 2 million COVID-19 shots in 4 months

Alberta pharmacists hit another milestone this past weekend, having administered more than 2 million COVID-19 vaccines, according to an [Alberta Pharmacists' Association news release](#). In just 4 short months, [pharmacists have administered 2,008,770 doses](#) of vaccine, proving once more that keeping Albertans vaccinated and protected from COVID-19 is an important public health priority for community pharmacists. Not only have pharmacists played a tremendous role in helping Alberta achieve its 70% vaccination target for first doses by providing over 1 million first doses, but also as of July 8, 52% of Albertans have now been fully immunized, with close to 900,000 second doses provided in community pharmacies.

OPA: Hesitancy to accept Moderna vaccine could lead to wasted doses

The push to get as many second doses into arms as possible is well underway in Ottawa, but a new challenge has arrived: a glut of options and concerns about vaccine perception could lead to wasted doses, [reports CTV](#). The biggest issue is hesitancy to accept a dose of Moderna. Justin Bates, CEO of the Ontario Pharmacists Association (OPA) says this is a province-wide issue. "There's really a challenge with the public misperception with an mRNA vaccine like Moderna and Pfizer, which is really disappointing because the efficacy and the safety are the same," Bates said. "This is a problem across the province and it's not just with pharmacies. It's a problem in primary care; it's a problem with public health units." Hesitancy isn't the only challenge in getting Moderna doses into arms before they expire. According to Bates, there is an alleged push from organized anti-vaxxers to waste doses of the vaccine. "What they do is they go online to pharmacy booking systems or even the provincial booking system and then they don't show up [to the appointments] deliberately," Bates said.

NS pharmacists celebrate 500,000 vaccine milestone

Pharmacists across Nova Scotia are celebrating after reaching a milestone of 500,000 COVID vaccine doses administered at pharmacies, [says Halifax Today](#). Nearly 300 pharmacy clinics across Nova Scotia helped achieve that goal on July 8. With a third booster dose making headlines, Allison Bodnar, CEO of the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia, said she thinks pharmacies will continue to be a vehicle for administering those shots if necessary. "Vaccine administration is right in our wheelhouse," she said. "Patients love it because it's convenient to them; we're everywhere in the province, we're open on weekends, we're open in the evenings. So, we hear repeatedly that pharmacies are a place where patients want to have their vaccines. We're already doing this, we're well-equipped to keep doing it and I would expect if boosters become our reality, that we will incorporate that into our day-to-day work, just like we do flu season every year."

BC to provide regulated substances under safe supply directive to mitigate drug overdoses

British Columbia will require all health authorities to develop programs that provide pharmaceutical-grade opioids, stimulants and other addictive substances to street-drug users, under a policy directive on safe supply aimed at curbing overdose deaths, [reports the Globe and Mail](#). However, the medications to be offered, and who will receive them, will still be at the discretion of individual programs and clinicians — one of the principal barriers to expanding access. And they can only be offered in certain “programmatically” or clinical settings, according to the policy directive. The document, obtained by the Globe and Mail, reveals that the provincial government recognizes that providing drug users with regulated versions of street drugs such as fentanyl, cocaine and methamphetamine can reduce deaths and other drug-related harms. But the government is reluctant to expand access quickly, the document suggests. The new policy is expected to be released publicly later this week.

National

Canada to reach 55M vaccine doses by week's end, catching up to US on second doses

Canada is expecting vaccine shipments to keep rolling in this week as the country inches closer to matching the percentage of people in the United States fully vaccinated against COVID-19, [says the Canadian Press](#). The federal government expects another 1.4 million doses of the shot from Pfizer to arrive in the next 7 days. It also plans to distribute the 1.5 million doses from Moderna that came in last Friday. By the end of the week, Canadian officials expect to have received a total of more than 55 million doses, including the latest shipments. The federal government has promised that it will reach 68 million shots delivered by the end of July and says it is still on track to hit that target.

Canadian health officials defend mix-and-match COVID-19 vaccine strategy after WHO comments

Canadian officials are defending Canada's mix-and-match approach to vaccinations after the World Health Organization (WHO) warned July 12 about “dangerous trends” in individual vaccination strategies, including mixing and matching, [according to CP24](#). In an online briefing, the WHO's chief scientist, Soumya Swaminathan, suggested to reporters that mixing and matching is dangerous because there is not currently enough data to support it. Swaminathan later [clarified on Twitter](#) that she was warning against individuals deciding to mix and match on their own. In a statement, Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada said the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) weighed a number of factors in making its recommendations. “NACI reviewed all available evidence from ongoing studies monitoring the mixing of COVID-19 vaccines,” the statement read. “NACI also considered the risk of Vaccine-Induced Immune Thrombotic Thrombocytopenia (VITT) associated with COVID-19 viral vector vaccines, Canada's current and projected mRNA (Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna) vaccine supply and principles of ethical decision-making. Updated recommendations were based on the current evidence and NACI's expert opinion.”

Sobeys parent company partners on new medical cannabis program

Canadian grocery chain operator Empire Co. is taking its first formal steps to provide cannabis access to its pharmacy customers after announcing a partnership with Pathway Health Corp. to develop a medical cannabis program, [says BNN Bloomberg](#). Pathway will provide pharmacists who work for Empire's pharmacy businesses across a network of grocery chains that include Sobeys, Safeway, IGA, Foodland, and FreshCo with a certified online training program to educate them on how medical cannabis can be prescribed to patients. Pathway will also provide Empire's pharmacists with a management system that can offer medical cannabis assessments to patients and connect them with a physician for further evaluation through either physical or virtual care.

International

Australia: 'We're bringing on pharmacists'

The head of Australia's revamped COVID vaccination rollout taskforce, Lt.-Gen. John Frewen, says he is "absolutely looking to bring on pharmacists" to speed up the rollout, [reports AJP](#). Speaking on Radio 2GB on July 12, Frewen said that up until now it's been about managing available supply and not wanting to spread it too thin. "So what we've done... is working around GPs and state hubs in the first instance, then we've been bringing on pharmacists — particularly in remote and regional areas where there wasn't perhaps the same access to a GP or one of the state clinics," he said. As additional vaccines become available, Australia will be looking at bringing on additional pharmacists, he added. Lt.-Gen. Frewen was responding to a question from host Ben Fordham who had questioned the lack of involvement of most of the pharmacy network to date.

US: APhA dismayed by Canadian drug import guidance

The American Pharmacists Association (APhA) is "dismayed" about drug importation guidance provided to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), arguing that importing drugs from Canada will threaten patient safety and create supply chain vulnerabilities. "FDA's drug importation program is smoke and mirrors," Ilisa Bernstein, APhA's senior vice president for pharmacy practice and government affairs, [said in a statement](#). "There is no evidence demonstrating that importing drugs from Canada will lower drug costs for patients. What's costly is the threat to patient safety that these drugs will pose at the pharmacy counter." The executive order, signed by President Biden on July 9, directs the FDA to work with states and tribal nations to import prescription drugs from Canada.

US: FDA to attach warning for Guillain-Barre Syndrome to Johnson & Johnson vaccine

Officials with the FDA are planning to attach a warning for Guillain-Barre syndrome to the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine, according to [reports in the New York Times](#). Although researchers have found that the risk of developing the rare neurological condition after vaccination is low, the risk seems to be 3 to 5 times higher among recipients of the vaccine compared to the general population. The new warning follows a temporary safety pause on the vaccine earlier in the year for concerns about rare blood clotting issues. A federal monitoring

system has helped identify approximately 100 suspected cases of Guillain-Barre syndrome among recipients of the Johnson & Johnson single-shot vaccine, according to the reports; however, these reports are considered preliminary, and most people recover.

US: FDA went flexible to mitigate shortages during COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic caused the FDA to flex regulations and priorities to prevent drug shortages, expediting more than 100 original abbreviated new drug applications (ANDAs) and 150 ANDA supplements for COVID-related products, according to the FDA's [Drug Shortages for Calendar Year 2020](#) report, released in late June. The agency reported 43 new shortages, but prevented 199, compared with 51 new shortages and 154 prevented shortages in 2019. On the other hand, 2020 had 86 ongoing shortages, compared with 76 in 2019.

In-depth

What the World Health Organization really said about mixing COVID-19 vaccines

The WHO is clarifying statements its chief scientist made on the safety and effectiveness of mixing and matching COVID-19 vaccines, after comments at a media briefing were taken out of context and caused confusion. Canadian experts have emphasized that the remarks by WHO officials were not about Canada's COVID-19 vaccination program, nor did they contradict recommendations by NACI and the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC). [CBC explains what happened](#) and how this impacts Canada's vaccination strategy.

When and how will we know if we need COVID-19 booster shots?

There's a lot we don't know yet about the data behind Pfizer's renewed push to change their 2-shot COVID-19 vaccination series to a 3-shot regimen. But as various factions bicker about whether a third shot is going to be needed, one thing is certain: The final decision will not rest with the companies, as this [report from STAT](#) explains.

Worth repeating

"Looking at data, looking at how to protect Canadians best, we have taken some strong decisions that quite frankly, are bearing out. We're seeing record numbers of uptake of vaccinations, we're seeing a serious and sustained decline in cases." — Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in a [news conference July 13](#), remarking on the country's vaccine strategy in light of the attention on what the WHO chief scientist said about mixing and matching COVID-19 vaccines.

This weekly COVID-19 update is compiled by the Canadian Pharmacists Association. 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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