

**From:** Public & Professional Affairs Department  
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**July 15, 2020**

## **CPhA**

### ***New drug therapy information document on remdesivir now available***

The antiviral drug remdesivir is currently being examined as a possible treatment for COVID-19. CPhA has reviewed the literature available to date and has developed a [new document](#) outlining current evidence. This document will be updated as new evidence becomes available. A French version will follow.

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).

## **Provincial**

### ***Private mobile lab offering blood testing services for COVID-19 antibodies***

A Calgary-based private mobile lab company is offering blood testing to detect antibodies associated with COVID-19, the [Canadian Press says](#). Ichor Blood Services says it charges \$75 for each home collection visit, with the cost of the antibody test itself at \$120 per person. Alberta's chief medical health officer, Dr. Deena Hinshaw, says that anyone paying for a private antibody test should do some research. "We don't yet know whether an antibody test will mean that that person has a level of immunity or not. We're not sure how a positive antibody test would correlate with immunity to COVID. And we also don't know how long antibodies last."

## **National**

### ***Survey: Impact of COVID-19 on Canadian Pharmacy Practice***

How has COVID-19 impacted you and your pharmacy practice? A pharmacy research team at the University of Alberta is studying the impact of COVID-19 on Canadian pharmacy practice and they would like input from pharmacists across Canada for their [national survey](#). The survey takes less than 10 minutes to complete and will help better understand the impact of COVID-19 on pharmacy services, the support pharmacists have received and roles undertaken during the pandemic. Le [sondage](#) et aussi disponible en français.

### ***Use of mental health medications increased with spread of COVID-19***

The COVID-19 pandemic has taken its toll on the mental and emotional well-being of Canadians. According to [research conducted by Express Scripts Canada](#) (ESC), there was an 11% increase in the number of people who made claims for antidepressants between January and June 2020 compared to the same period last year. In addition to this striking increase, overall Express Scripts Canada's claim volumes increased by 20% in the pre-isolation period, indicating that patients may have been filling medications despite warnings that stockpiling might lead to drug shortages. This analysis suggests that Canadians were focused on the pandemic and fearful that they would run out of their medications, which is further evidence of the serious impact COVID-19 is having on Canadians' mental health.

### ***The great PPE panic: How COVID-19 caught Canada with its stockpiles down***

The federal government gives itself credit for swift action in the face of severe supply problems in the early weeks of its pandemic response. But what made that mad scramble for masks, gowns, gloves and other essential products necessary in the first place? CBC News [looks at the lessons learned](#) from the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic and how Canada is moving forward.

### ***Survey shows 54% of Canadian cancer patients have had tests or treatments delayed as result of COVID-19***

A [report from the Globe and Mail](#) shows that more than 50% of Canadians affected by cancer have had treatments and tests cancelled or delayed as a result of COVID-19 precautions, according to a Leger survey from the Canadian Cancer Survivor Network (CCSN). The CCSN is calling on Canadian governments to ensure cancer care is made a top priority during any public-health crisis in the future, with president and chief executive officer Jackie Manthorne suggesting the absence of an expected boom in COVID-19 patients shows that cancer care appointments should not have been delayed at all. “We now know that the huge physical, psychological and financial impact of dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, while also facing cancer, has put these Canadians in double jeopardy,” Manthorne says.

### ***First Canadian company begins COVID-19 vaccine trials on humans***

A Quebec City biopharmaceutical company began clinical trials on humans this week for a plant-derived COVID-19 vaccine. Medicago is the first Canadian company to administer doses of a potential vaccine to volunteers: 180 men and women aged 18 to 55 who will each receive 2 doses 21 days apart. The company expects to have safety and efficacy results for the 2 doses in October. “[The] timeline is very aggressive and in fact we’re trying to do in 18 months what normally requires 5 to 6 years,” Nathalie Landry, executive vice-president of scientific and medical affairs at Medicago, [told CTV News](#).

### ***Majority of Canadians would get a vaccine against COVID-19, survey suggests***

A new poll suggests that the majority of Canadians would get a vaccine against COVID-19 if it was available [CTV News reports](#). The survey, conducted by Research Co., found 75% of Canadians would get the vaccine. That number is slightly higher than when Canadians were polled on the same question in April. But 15% of Canadians polled said they would “probably not” or “definitely not” get a vaccine if it became available. Another 11% said they weren't sure.

## **International**

### ***APhA and FIP call for continued WHO support and cooperation in fight against COVID-19***

In a [joint news release](#) the American Pharmacists Association (APhA) and International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) strongly urge the US government to reconsider its withdrawal from the World Health Organization (WHO) and to support collaborative efforts in the global fight against COVID-19. The release reads, in part: “We stand with front-line pharmacists around the world who are caring for patients and rely heavily on the support of the WHO during the COVID-19 global crisis. Global efforts for patient care support and access to safe and quality medical products, among other support, are essential and cannot be compromised.”

### ***RPS: Pharmacy must be at heart of second wave of COVID-19 planning***

Responding to a [new report from the Academy of Medical Sciences](#) that warns that the UK must prepare now for a potential new wave of COVID-19 infections this winter, president of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS) Sandra Gidley says: “This new report underlines why pharmacy must be at the heart of preparations for a potential second wave of COVID-19. If the government is to achieve its ambition for the ‘biggest flu vaccine program in history,’ it must involve pharmacy across Great Britain in delivering it. Pharmacies can also support the rollout of antibody testing to establish what proportion of the population has been infected with the virus.”

### ***FIP: Updated global guidance to support pharmacists***

The FIP has [updated its global guidance](#) to support the pharmacy profession through the COVID-19 pandemic, incorporating

new evidence and introducing several changes to recommendations for pharmacy practice and operations.

### ***US hospitals running short of remdesivir for COVID-19 patients***

From Houston to Miami, US hospitals are running short of remdesivir, the experimental Gilead Sciences treatment for COVID-19, [STAT reports](#). As a result, clinicians are temporarily left to tackle some of the highest caseloads in the country without one of the few tools proven to work against the disease. This is the latest in a long string of issues plaguing US government distribution of this drug, and one that physicians predicted back in May.

### ***New data shows remdesivir “potently inhibited” COVID-19 virus in human lung cell cultures***

According to new research, remdesivir potently inhibited the virus that causes COVID-19 in human lung cell cultures and improved lung function in mice infected with the virus, [Pharmafile writes](#). These pre-clinical findings help explain the clinical effect the drug has had in treating COVID-19 patients. The Gilead Sciences drug has been given to patients hospitalized with the coronavirus on a compassionate-use basis since late January, and a number of studies since have supported its ability to reduce recovery times in patients with the disease.

### ***Expert warns effective COVID-19 vaccine unlikely by next year***

There is little chance of a 100% effective COVID-19 vaccine by 2021, a French expert warns, urging people to take social distancing measures more seriously, [Agence France-Presse reports](#). “A vaccine is several years in development,” said epidemiologist Arnaud Fontanet, a member of the team of scientists advising the government on the crisis, speaking on BFM TV television. “Of course, there is an unprecedented effort to develop a vaccine, but I would be very surprised if we had one that was effective in 2021,” he added.

### ***Moderna Phase 1 results show COVID-19 vaccine safe, induces immune response***

Moderna, Inc.’s experimental vaccine for COVID-19 showed it was safe and provoked immune responses in all 45 healthy volunteers in an ongoing early-stage study, [Reuters reports](#). No study volunteers experienced a serious side effect, but more than half reported mild or moderate reactions such as fatigue, headache, chills, muscle aches or pain at the injection site. Moderna was the first to start human testing of a vaccine for the novel coronavirus on March 16, some 66 days after the genetic sequence of the virus was released.

### ***Using PPIs may increase risk of contracting COVID-19: study***

A study of more than 53,000 Americans published in the [American Journal of Gastrology](#) suggests that using proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) once or twice a day would significantly increase the chances of testing positive for COVID-19 compared to those who are not taking the drug. Previous research has demonstrated that a low level of gastric acid, with a pH below 3, alters the infectivity of SARS-CoV-1, the virus that caused the SARS epidemic. The researchers wanted to study if the phenomenon would apply to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.

### ***Fund created to respond to antimicrobial resistance threat***

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) has the potential to render diseases that are relatively easy to treat today virtually incurable, a problem that threatens developed and developing nations alike. Left unchecked, AMR could significantly eclipse the global health challenge that the world is facing currently with COVID-19. That’s why more than 20 leading pharmaceutical companies have joined together to invest nearly \$1 billion through the [AMR Action Fund](#) with the goal of bringing 2 to 4 new antibiotics to patients by the end of the next decade. This is the largest collective venture ever created to address AMR. The fund has been developed in collaboration with the WHO, the European Investment Bank and the Wellcome Trust. It aims to overcome key technical and funding barriers of late-stage antibiotic development and will work with governments to ensure there is a sustainable pipeline of new antibiotics to fight superbugs.

## **Newsworthy**

### ***The debate over airborne COVID-19 spread***

The WHO says aerosol COVID-19 transmission “cannot be ruled out.” Here’s what that means as [explained in VOX](#).

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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