

From: Public & Professional Affairs Department
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CPhA

Upcoming COVID Conversations: Virtual Care — Will It Transform Pharmacy Practice?

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented challenges interacting with patients given the restrictions on physical distancing and self-isolation. Pharmacists have quickly adopted virtual care as a mode of communication to increase patient accessibility to care. Legislative and regulatory changes have permitted some pharmacy services to be provided virtually, reflecting the integral role pharmacists play in the healthcare system. On **Wednesday, July 29 at 1:00-2:15pm** EDT, Shelita Dattani and pharmacy panellists Alison Bodnar, Sammu Dhaliwall, Sean Simpson and Tara Maltman-Just will share their experiences with providing care digitally and the evolution of the profession through virtual care. [Register now.](#)

Updated statement: COVID-19 in patients taking disease-modifying therapy for multiple sclerosis

CPhA's statement on COVID-19 in patients taking disease-modifying therapy for the management of multiple sclerosis has been updated to include the results of France's Covisep registry as well as 2 smaller studies from Italy and the United States. The statement 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.

Provincial

AB expands number of pharmacies offering COVID-19 testing, but public list still unavailable

The number of community pharmacies in Alberta offering asymptomatic COVID-19 testing has grown, though the names and locations of the pharmacies remain inaccessible to the public. The provincial government confirmed to [Global News](#) yesterday that there are now approximately 40 pharmacies in Alberta providing the test, up from 20 when the pilot launched on June 25. As to why the list of pharmacies offering testing is not publicly available, health minister Tyler Shandro says, "We wanted to make sure that the pilot program is working without those pharmacies being overwhelmed. But also to make the point that these pharmacies are not replacement for the assessment centres and the work that is being done there."

National

Essential Services Contingency Reserve for PPE launched

The federal government [announced](#) that it is launching a new initiative as part of the Safe Restart Agreement with provinces to provide PPE support to public, private and not-for-profit organizations providing essential services, including pharmacies. The Essential Services Contingency Reserve (ESCR) will complement the government's recently launched Supply Hub by helping essential service organizations bridge urgent, short-term gaps in their PPE supplies when other sources of supply are unavailable, to avoid any significant disruptions in services to Canadians. The reserve will be operational beginning in August. At that time, eligible organizations will be able to [apply online](#) for a range of equipment available for purchase at cost, including

KN95 respirators, surgical masks, non-medical cloth and disposable masks, gowns, face shields, hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes and gloves.

Canadians turn to self-care during the COVID-19 pandemic: survey

In a [recent survey](#) about Canadians' management of their health before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, approximately half of survey respondents reported that they have missed an in-person appointment with a doctor due to COVID-19 pandemic response measures. Of those, more than two-thirds practiced a range of self-care activities: 12% of respondents took care of the problem themselves, another 53% used virtual care services and 7% sought a pharmacist's advice. Further, more than half of those who managed their health conditions themselves during the pandemic were satisfied with the results, and more than half of those who used virtual care would do so again even after the pandemic is over. As a result, more than 50% of Canadians are now more interested in finding ways to practice self-care at home. The survey was conducted by Redfern Research and commissioned by Consumer Health Products Canada in May 2020. It asked more than 2000 Canadians about how they were getting informed and treating their health since COVID-19 measures began across Canada in mid-March.

List of hand sanitizers being recalled by Health Canada growing

The list of hand sanitizers being recalled by Health Canada is growing. The agency says some hand sanitizers are made with ethanol or denaturants that are not acceptable for use and may pose health risks. It says denaturants are added to ethanol, which makes it unfit for human consumption, and the products are being recalled. Yesterday's [recall adds 13 more products](#) to the list, bringing the total to more than 40.

PM pens op-ed with world leaders calling for equal access to COVID-19 vaccine

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has joined the leaders of Spain, New Zealand, South Korea, Ethiopia and 3 other countries in calling for equitable access to a coronavirus vaccine when one is developed, [says the CBC](#). In a new opinion piece published in the *Washington Post's* Global Opinions section, the leaders urge countries to cooperate on manufacturing and distributing a vaccine to ensure that less-developed countries don't lose out to more developed ones. "As the world is still in the midst of the deadliest pandemic of the 21st century, with the number of cases still rising at the global level, immunization is our best chance of ending the pandemic at home and across the world — but only if all countries get access to the vaccine," it reads.

Canada still working with China on COVID-19 vaccine despite delay

The federal government is still in talks with China over moving forward with clinical trials of a potential COVID-19 vaccine, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau [told reporters](#), despite a delay in shipping the drug to Canada. Trials for Ad5-nCoV, developed by biopharmaceutical company CanSino Biologics along with Chinese government scientists, was supposed to be underway after Health Canada approved it for human testing in May, but [progress came to a standstill](#) after Canadian authorities said the Chinese government have yet to sign off on shipping the drug to Canada.

International

Pharmacies may not be able to handle a second wave, group warns

A pharmacists' group in Ireland has warned that its members may not be in a position to meet the challenge of a second wave of COVID-19 infections hitting the state if the government does not provide support to its sector, [reports the Irish Times](#). The Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU) says that during the first phase of the coronavirus pandemic the government had "poured resources into sustaining GP services," but that pharmacies were "ignored." The union is urging the government to put a package of support in place for its members as part of the July economic stimulus plan, which is to be announced this week.

Telehealth left patients without meds

Restrictions preventing Australian pharmacists from administering injectable medications forced patients to go without critical medications during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic as GPs turned to telehealth, [reports Pharmacy Daily](#). Pharmacy Guild of Australia national vice president Trent Twomey told a Queensland State Parliament Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee hearing last week that rules preventing pharmacists from

administering injectables are “nonsensical.”

Pay increase omission a “kick in the teeth”

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS) is asking the government for [urgent clarification](#) about why pharmacists were not included in an announcement giving public sector workers, including doctors, an above-inflation pay raise because of their contribution to the pandemic. RPS president Sandra Gidley said, “Once again hard-working frontline pharmacists have been side-stepped when it comes to public sector pay increases. To have the immense dedication and commitment pharmacists have shown ignored in this pay rise review is a real kick in the teeth.”

Extension of emergency dispensing provisions

The extension of the Australian government’s emergency dispensing provisions until September 30 means community pharmacists, under strict conditions, can give patients up to 1 month’s supply of their Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) medicine once in a 12-month period without a prescription, [says The Pharmacy Guild of Australia](#). Under the provisions, patients must previously have been prescribed the medicine and the pharmacist must be satisfied the need is urgent. The temporary arrangements, initially put in place in January 2020, were in response to the bushfire crisis and then extended to assist with physical distancing and to reduce demand on doctors as the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded. Announcing the latest extension, minister for health Greg Hunt said that between April 1 and May 31 more than 75,000 medications were dispensed under this measure.

Global pharmacy response to COVID-19 published

How global pharmacy has risen to the challenges of COVID-19 is shared in an [article in the *Research in Social and Administrative Pharmacy* journal online](#). The article describes the strategy adopted by the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) in collaboration with an international group of experts to support the services that pharmacists and their teams provide to communities throughout the pandemic and their important contribution to easing the huge strain being placed on health systems around the world.

Oxford, CanSino vaccine teams say early reports show desired immune responses

Scientists at Oxford University say their experimental COVID-19 vaccine has been shown in an early trial to prompt a protective immune response in hundreds of people who got the shot, the [Associated Press reports](#). In [research published Monday in the journal *The Lancet*](#), scientists said that they found that their experimental COVID-19 vaccine produced a dual immune response in people aged 18 to 55 that lasted at least 2 months after they were immunized. Chinese researchers also published a study on the experimental CanSino Biologics COVID-19 vaccine in *The Lancet*, using a similar technique as the Oxford scientists. They reported that in their study of about 500 people, an immune response was detected in those who were immunized. But they noted that because the participants weren’t exposed to the coronavirus afterwards, it wasn’t possible to tell if they were protected from the disease.

Double-shot COVID vaccines multiply immunization challenges

Vaccine specialists say that 2 doses of a COVID-19 vaccine may be better than 1, but doubling the number of shots each person needs could complicate efforts to immunize billions of people, [Bloomberg notes](#). The latest results from the Oxford-AstraZeneca partnership and Moderna highlight how producing vaccines and deploying them to the world’s population in the midst of a pandemic would make a massive feat even more complex.

EU in talks to secure possible COVID vaccines

The European Union is negotiating advanced purchase agreements for the COVID-19 vaccines in development from Moderna, Sanofi, Johnson & Johnson and others, [Reuters reports](#). The discussions come on the heels of an earlier deal between 4 European nations and AstraZeneca, which would cover 400 million doses of the company’s vaccine. The EU is taking a more assertive stance than in the past, following the US’s move to secure supplies of potential treatments and vaccines.

J&J begins COVID-19 vaccine trial

Johnson & Johnson (J&J) has begun its first coronavirus vaccine trial, [according to the Wall Street Journal](#). The company will enroll more than 1000 healthy adults to test the safety and efficacy of its potential vaccine. A larger phase 3 study is slated to begin in September. The company expects to have preliminary results this year which, if positive, could support approval in 2021.

Pfizer and BioNTech to supply US with 100 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine

The US will pay \$1.95 billion for Pfizer and BioNTech to produce and deliver 100 million doses of their jointly developed COVID-19 vaccine candidate in the US if it proves safe and effective in humans, [CNBC reports](#). Under the agreement, the US can acquire an additional 500 million doses, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) says. If it proves safe and effective in a large phase 3 trial and receives regulatory approval, doses will begin to be delivered by Pfizer to locations across the US at the government's direction. The vaccine would then be made available to Americans "at no cost." It's unclear who the first doses of the potential vaccine would go to and how that decision would be made.

New COVID-19 study, despite flaws, adds to case against hydroxychloroquine

Hydroxychloroquine did not lead to faster symptom improvement among patients who had COVID-19 symptoms and were not hospitalized, [STAT reports](#), marking the latest study in which the repurposed malaria drug appeared useless in the current outbreak. The result is likely to inflame the long-running political conflict around the drug, which US president Trump says he took to prevent COVID-19 infection. But the study itself has significant limitations that prevent it from being a final word on the subject.

Newsorthy

In some COVID-19 survivors, lingering effects create a steep climb to full recovery

For some COVID-19 patients deemed "recovered," symptoms of the illness can last months. Doctors are racing to understand why in this [Globe and Mail feature](#).

Worth Repeating

"Success is fragile" — Canada's deputy chief public health officer, Dr. Howard Njoo, at a [press conference yesterday](#) urging Canadians to keep following public health measures as cases of COVID-19 among young people continue to tick upwards.

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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