

From: Public & Professional Affairs Department
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Note: The Weekly will not be published next Wednesday, August 5. The next issue will be published on Wednesday, August 12.

CPhA

Updated information on remdesivir now available

The antiviral drug remdesivir has recently been approved by Health Canada for the treatment of COVID-19. CPhA has reviewed the literature available to date and has developed this document outlining current evidence. Treatment of COVID-19 with remdesivir is available in [English](#) and [French](#) and will be updated as new evidence becomes available.

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

Provincial

AB pharmacists lead the way with asymptomatic COVID-19 testing

Select pharmacies in Alberta have begun administering COVID-19 tests for those who are asymptomatic and have no known exposure to the virus. To learn more about how testing unfolded in Alberta, [Pharmacy U](#) spoke with Bruce Winston, CEO and owner of Sandstone Pharmacies, 3 locations of which participated in the initial rollout.

National

Remdesivir authorized with conditions for the treatment of patients with severe COVID-19 symptoms

Health Canada [has authorized with conditions](#) the drug remdesivir (brand name Veklury) manufactured by Gilead Sciences Canada, Inc. for the treatment of patients with severe symptoms of COVID-19 who have pneumonia and require extra oxygen to help them breathe. Remdesivir is the first drug that Health Canada has authorized for the treatment of COVID-19. It is administered intravenously and will be used only in health care facilities where patients can be closely monitored.

Feds to fund expansion of COVID-19 testing and contact tracing

The federal government [will provide \\$4.28 billion](#) to further expand COVID-19 testing and contact tracing capacity, and the associated data management and information sharing systems. This funding will ensure a national capacity to conduct 200,000 tests per day to help manage COVID-19 outbreaks over the coming year. Canada will also provide \$7.5 billion towards personal protective equipment. Part of this funding will be used to help ensure availability of testing components like reagents, swabs and point-of-care kits, and promote innovation in developing new testing components and equipment. It will also help support contact tracing, including by making federal human resources available to provinces and territories, and help modernize data management and infrastructure to accelerate reporting on cases and access to these data by public health officials.

Most Canadians don't think we'll see a COVID vaccine by 2021: survey

Only 25% of Canadians believe a vaccine for COVID-19 will be available to the public by the end of the year. That's according to a [recent survey](#) by Narrative Research, in collaboration with Logit Group, which found 48% aren't very confident we'll see an immunization by 2021, while 22% are somewhere in the middle. The study also asked Canadians how likely they'll be to get immunized, once that's an option. "Only three-quarters of the population anticipate that they'll get the vaccination once it's available," said the polling company's CEO Margaret Brigley. "That means there's a notable chunk of the population that will not."

Health experts ask Ottawa to make a decision on funding domestic COVID-19 vaccine trial

The federal government is being pressed to approve funding for a made-in-Canada COVID-19 vaccine to lessen the risk that Canadians will have to line up and wait on a foreign-made vaccine, [says the Canadian Press](#). Health care professionals have written to Innovation Minister Navdeep Bains to urge him to make up his mind on a proposal submitted in April by Providence Therapeutics of Toronto. The company is seeking \$35 million to establish whether its vaccine is effective in humans after successful animal trials.

Ottawa, experts discussing COVID-19 vaccine orders amid concerns of delay

Active [discussions are taking place](#) to potentially pre-order COVID-19 vaccine doses for Canadians, Chief Public Health Officer Theresa Tam says. Addressing concerns that Canadians will have to get in line behind other countries to wait for the COVID-19 vaccine, Dr. Tam adds that an independent vaccine task force is advising the government on options for Canada's choice of vaccine, including exploring the possibility of manufacturing a potential cure for COVID-19 at home.

Chair in pandemic preparedness research awarded to UBC professor

The Health Research Foundation (HRF) of Innovative Medicines Canada (IMC) [has announced](#) that Dr. Srinivas Murthy, clinical associate professor in the department of pediatrics at the University of British Columbia and critical care specialist and investigator at the BC Children's Hospital, has been awarded the Health Research Foundation of Innovative Medicines Canada Chair in Pandemic Preparedness Research. The research chair is made possible by IMC's member companies, who contributed \$500,000 over 3 years to support the work of a researcher affiliated with a recognized academic institution.

International

The future of pharmacy in a sustainable NHS

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS) has [published a document](#) identifying principles and areas for transformation and growth in the National Health System (NHS) to drive further development of the profession and pharmaceutical services as a result of the pandemic. "The commitment of the pharmacy profession to patient care, and the hard work and determination to sustain medicines supply and key pharmaceutical care services throughout the pandemic, has been a source of immense pride. Now it's important that these positive changes to patient care and pharmacy practice in response to COVID-19 are retained and built upon. We must continue to improve patient experience whilst protecting the future sustainability of the NHS," says the discussion document.

APhA: Pharmacists can help fight COVID-19 and flu

The American Pharmacists Association (APhA) is [asking Congress to authorize](#) pharmacists as health care providers under Medicare Part B, allowing them to serve patients for the purpose of testing for COVID-19 and/or influenza on an emergency basis. They have launched an advocacy campaign encouraging members to contact their federal legislators, asking them to incorporate pharmacists into the strategy for testing and vaccinating for COVID-19 and influenza.

Experimental COVID-19 vaccine put to final test in thousands of US volunteers

The biggest test yet of an experimental COVID-19 vaccine began on Monday with the first of some 30,000 Americans rolling up their sleeves to receive shots created by the US government as part of the all-out global race to stop the pandemic. Final-stage testing of the vaccine, developed by the National Institutes of Health and Moderna, began with volunteers at numerous sites around the US given either a real dose or a placebo without being told which, says [the Associated Press](#).

New reporting process brings threat of fewer drugs for US hospitals

A Trump administration change in the way hospitals report coronavirus data may mean hospitals that don't get it right every day could end up receiving fewer critical drugs like remdesivir, [Politico reports](#). The new system changed how some hospitals report key COVID-19 data every day and required more information, such as the breakdown of adults versus pediatric patients. Adding new requirements sets off a scramble to adapt.

EU says no to WHO initiative to purchase COVID-19 vaccines

The European Union is not interested in buying potential COVID-19 vaccines through an initiative co-led by the World Health Organization (WHO), citing the high cost and slow pace of the project, [Reuters reports](#). The EU is already in talks with drug makers for shots cheaper than \$40 per dose. The position shows the EU has only partly embraced a global approach in the race for COVID-19 vaccines. While it is a top supporter of initiatives for worldwide equitable access, it prefers prioritizing supplies for the EU population.

Another study finds hydroxychloroquine does not help COVID-19 patients

More evidence is emerging to underscore that the anti-malarial drug hydroxychloroquine does not help COVID-19 patients. A [study published in the New England Journal of Medicine](#) found that hydroxychloroquine — given either alone or in combination with the antibiotic azithromycin — did not improve the conditions of hospitalized patients with mild-to-moderate COVID-19.

Trump defends disproved COVID-19 treatment

President Trump issued a defense of hydroxychloroquine as a COVID-19 treatment hours after social media companies moved to take down videos promoting its use as potentially harmful misinformation, the [Associated Press reports](#). The president, in a marked shift from the more measured approach he has taken toward the virus in recent days, took to Twitter to promote the decades-old malaria drug and to amplify criticism of Dr. Anthony Fauci, the top US infectious disease expert.

Facebook's vaccine misinformation problem faces a new test with COVID-19

As scientists begin to clear a path to a potential COVID-19 vaccine, researchers and advocates are increasingly sounding the alarm over what they see as a looming threat: Facebook's apparent inability to police dangerous falsehoods about vaccines, [STAT says](#). Since the outset of the pandemic, vaccine-related falsehoods have ballooned on the platform, and research suggests the problem is only growing worse.

Newsworthy

Anti-masking groups draw from anti-vaccination playbook to spread misinformation

As more regions across the country adopt mandatory masking policies in an effort to minimize the spread of COVID-19, some anti-masking groups are joining forces with anti-vaccination proponents and adopting their techniques to spread misinformation and amplify their message, [CBC News reports](#). The similarities between organized anti-masking and anti-vaccine movements are striking, says Maya Goldenberg, an associate professor of philosophy specializing in vaccine hesitancy at the University of Guelph.

Worth Repeating

"People who catch COVID-19 aren't bad people and at the same time people who avoid COVID-19 exposure aren't fear-mongering. As much as possible, we need to support each other." — Alberta's chief medical officer of health, Dr. Deena Hinshaw, in a [series of tweets](#), asking Albertans to make changes to their daily routines to prevent the further spread of COVID-19

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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