

**Subject:**

The Weekly: CPhA's COVID-19 Update for March 3



**March 3, 2021**

## **CPhA**

### ***COVID Conversations upcoming webinar: COVID-19 vaccines***

CPhA's next COVID Conversations webinar will take place on **March 4** from **12:00-1:30pm ET**. Join us for [COVID-19 vaccines: What we know today and what we will need to know tomorrow](#) as we take a look at pharmacy's current role in the largest public health vaccination campaign in Canadian history, and how it may evolve in the coming weeks and months. Our expert panellists will review technologies and evidence, discuss key patient education strategies to reduce vaccine hesitancy and answer your questions. Registration is free and open to all.

### ***CPhA stresses the accessibility of pharmacies in the rollout of COVID vaccines***

Canada's pharmacies say they're primed and ready to start administering COVID-19 vaccines at across the country, as government officials prepare for the next phase of vaccine rollout. While the details of how and when pharmacies will be incorporated into vaccine rollout plans differ by province, Joelle Walker, vice-president of public affairs at the Canadian Pharmacists Association, said all have signalled use of pharmacies at some point to reach the broader public. "Pharmacies are very conveniently located. Most Canadians live within 5 km of a pharmacy, which makes them very accessible to people who can't travel to major centres to get vaccinated," she said during an interview with [CTVNews.ca](https://www.ctvnews.ca).

### ***CPhA recognizes pharmacy's role during COVID-19 for Pharmacy Appreciation Month***

CPhA joined the pharmacy community across Canada to launch its Pharmacy Appreciation Month (PAM) campaign on March 1. With a new focus for 2021, moving from 'awareness' to 'appreciation,' the campaign aims to recognize and celebrate the extraordinary role pharmacy professionals play in health care, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. We've developed a variety of [resources](#) to help the pharmacy community celebrate, and we encourage you to join the conversation on social media using the hashtag #PAM2021.

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

---

## **Provincial**

### ***BC pharmacists ready for next steps in vaccination plans***

Following last week's announcement that Health Canada has approved the fridge-stable AstraZeneca vaccine, pharmacies in BC are ready to work in parallel with the mass clinics that are being planned. "As pharmacists demonstrated during the flu immunization campaign this past year, they can reach large numbers of people in a very short period," said Geraldine Vance, CEO, British Columbia Pharmacy Association (BCPhA), [in a news release](#). "Between October and December 2020, BC's community pharmacists administered more than a million flu shots (on average almost 86,000 per week). Pharmacy immunizations are easily accessible and provide robust capacity to

add to the provinces' COVID vaccine program. This is something we remain hopeful will be used in the next phases.”

### ***Vaccines to be administered at 102 Alberta pharmacies***

Albertans aged 75 and older will be able to book their vaccination appointment at more than 100 participating community pharmacies in Edmonton, Red Deer and Calgary, Alberta Health Minister Tyler Shandro [announced last week](#), with appointments beginning this week. “The Alberta Pharmacists’ Association (RxA) is very pleased to have had the opportunity to work with Alberta Health towards the launch of this program,” said Margaret Wing, CEO of RxA. “Community pharmacists are well prepared and ready to administer COVID-19 vaccine. As the vaccine supply increases in the province, we look forward to expanding the program to include all community pharmacists in pharmacies across the province. Alberta’s vaccinating pharmacists are committed to supporting the provincial efforts led by Alberta Health towards safe, efficient vaccination for all Albertans as quickly as possible.”

### ***Small group of pharmacies to do ‘dry run’ ahead of vaccine rollout***

The Ontario Pharmacists Association (OPA) is preparing for diverse possibilities, and the province’s community pharmacies are set to become part of the broader COVID-19 vaccination effort this spring, reports [Canadian Healthcare Network](#) (subscriber access only). “We’re engaged with the collaborative discussions with the Ministry [of Health] to determine a tabletop exercise which will allow us to draft a playbook,” said Justin Bates, CEO of OPA. The tabletop exercise is set to take place next week, and a dry run exercise in around 12 to 15 pharmacy locations soon after, Bates said. “Then eventually that will roll into a live pilot, in a limited fashion. And that will depend largely on supplies. As long as we have the supply coming, I expect pharmacies to be engaged as part of the community rollout for phase 2, sometime between March and April. And we’re looking forward to that.”

### ***Pharmacists join Quebec’s vaccination efforts***

Quebec has reached a deal with pharmacies that will allow them to start administering COVID-19 vaccines by mid-March to help the province get ahead of more contagious virus variants, Health Minister Christian Dubé said on March 2. As [reported by the Canadian Press](#), some 350 pharmacies in the Montreal area will start taking appointments by March 15 for people as young as 70, he said. The program will eventually expand to more than 1400 pharmacies across the province that will administer about 2 million doses, Dubé added. In a [CBC report](#), Pierre-Marc Gervais, the senior director of pharmaceutical services for the Association québécoise des pharmaciens propriétaires (AQPP) said, “From our experience from the flu vaccination, we know pharmacies can, for an extended period of time, give 100,000 doses of vaccines per week. That’s the minimum, and in some weeks we gave 140,000 doses of flu vaccines.”

### ***Indigenous pharmacist hopes to get COVID vaccine into arms of First Nations, Metis in SK***

Saskatoon’s Jaris Swidrovich, the only Indigenous person in Canada to hold a Doctorate of Pharmacy, became fully certified to administer vaccines, including the COVID-19 vaccine, and hopes in the coming weeks and months to be able to help out with clinics, specifically those focusing on First Nations and Metis COVID immunizations, [reports CKOM Radio](#). “I think the way I will be helping out will be through some community-based organizations’ vaccine clinics, particularly organizations that serve urban First Nations and Metis folks and perhaps even going out to my own reserve, which is Yellow Quill First Nation,” he said. He hopes to further build trust in vaccines when he participates in any community immunization clinic, especially given the roots of vaccine hesitancy in some Indigenous peoples based on historical realities. “Having that intimate understanding of why there might be hesitancy across First Nations and Metis and Inuit folks in Canada, I think some of that hesitancy might be easier to overcome with a First Nations person who has received the injection himself and is also providing it,” Swidrovich said.

---

## **National**

### ***Second dose of COVID-19 vaccine can be 4 months after the first, expert panel says***

An expert panel that advises the federal government on vaccination has determined that second doses of COVID-19 vaccines can be given up to 4 months after the first, [reports the Globe and Mail](#). The shift from the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI), which previously supported extending the interval between doses to no more than 6 weeks, would open the door for more people to receive their first vaccination while supplies are still limited. It would also lend support to other provinces to follow the new vaccine schedule BC adopted on March 1.

### ***Vaccine panel's advice on AstraZeneca use for seniors to evolve with new data***

The federal vaccine advisory committee's guidance advising against giving the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine to seniors, despite Health Canada's approval for its use by adults of all ages, should not be read as "static," say public health officials, dismissing concerns that the conflicting advice puts provinces and territories in a bind, [reports the Hill Times](#) (subscriber access only). "As they see more and more of that real-world data accumulating, that will be adjusted as well," said Canada's Chief Public Health Officer Dr. Theresa Tam during a press briefing March 2. "This is both a challenge but also really exciting, because the real-world data is helping us adjust... Don't read their recommendations as sort of static." Her comments came after NACI said the AstraZeneca vaccine should not be administered to people 65 and older, citing the ["limited information on the efficacy of this vaccine"](#) in this age group at this time.

### ***Canada received 'last piece' of manufacturing data for Johnson & Johnson vaccine***

Canada has received the "last piece" of manufacturing data needed to decide whether to approve the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, Health Canada's chief medical adviser says. In an [interview with Global News](#) on March 1, Dr. Supriya Sharma said the review of the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine candidate is progressing very well. "There was a last piece of some of the manufacturing data that we were expecting and we received that on Saturday," she said. Sharma added that Health Canada is "expecting to make a final decision within the next couple of weeks." If approved, the vaccine would become the fourth approved for use in Canada.

### ***Most Canadians confident federal vaccine rollout is back on track: Poll***

A majority of Canadians believe Ottawa will follow through on its plan to provide enough COVID-19 vaccine doses for everyone who wants a shot by the fall, [reports the Canadian Press](#). According to an online survey by Leger and the Association for Canadian Studies, 56% of respondents are confident the federal government can buy enough vaccines to ensure inoculation for those who seek it by September. Canadians on both coasts and in Quebec were optimistic about their province's rollout plans as well as that of the feds. Respondents in Ontario and the Prairies were more skeptical, with just 1 in 3 Albertans expressing faith in their government's delivery scheme. The poll also found that most residents are in no rush to lift antipandemic lockdowns, with two-thirds saying restrictions should remain at least until half the population is immunized.

### ***COVID-19 Alert App: Social media and promotional resources available***

Health Canada and PHAC have created a number of resources to help promote the COVID-19 Alert App, including an online [digital toolkit](#) where you can access ready-made COVID-19 awareness products, including digital and printable COVID Alert products.

---

## **International**

### ***COVID-19 vaccinations guidance for community pharmacy in England available***

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society has co-signed new guidance for community pharmacies in England to use when planning to provide COVID-19 vaccinations. [Planning to provide COVID-19 vaccinations in community pharmacies](#) outlines some of the key considerations and requirements for providing the vaccination service. Claire Anderson, chair of the English Pharmacy Board, says "Pharmacists across the health service have shown an incredible commitment to making the COVID-19 vaccination programme a success. As the programme continues to expand in England, we've welcomed steps to enable more community pharmacy-led sites to play their part in tackling one of the biggest health challenges of our time."

## **CVS, Walgreens look for big data reward from COVID-19 vaccinations**

Administering COVID-19 vaccines comes with a valuable perk for retail pharmacies: access to troves of consumer data, [reports the Wall Street Journal](#). Chains such as CVS Health Corp., Walmart Inc. and Walgreens Boots Alliance, Inc. are collecting data from millions of customers as they sign up for shots, enrolling them in patient systems and having recipients register customer profiles. The retailers say they are using the information to promote their stores and services, tailor marketing and keep in touch with consumers. The companies also say the information is critical in streamlining vaccinations and improving record-keeping, while ensuring only qualified people are receiving shots.

## **WHO panel issues strong advice against hydroxychloroquine for COVID-19**

The drug hydroxychloroquine, once touted by former US president Donald Trump as a pandemic “game-changer,” should not be used to prevent COVID-19 and has no meaningful effect on patients already infected, a World Health Organization (WHO) expert panel said. The anti-inflammatory drug should not be part of the drugs used to fight against the pandemic, the WHO’s Guideline Development Group (GDG) expert panel [wrote in the British Medical Journal](#) (BMJ), stating that it is “not worthwhile” exploring in further research studies of possible COVID-19 treatments. This “strong recommendation,” the experts said, is based on high-certainty evidence from 6 randomized controlled trials involving more than 6000 participants both with and without known exposure to COVID-19.

---

## **In Depth**

### ***Program addresses vaccine hesitancy with jargon-free, non-judgmental expertise***

When it comes to vaccine hesitancy, misinformation and mistrust sparked by “medical racism” are among issues confronting scientists, doctors and community groups trying to provide assurance as immunization programs roll out across Canada. [The Canadian Press reports](#) on an initiative, run by COVID-19 Resources Canada, in which anyone hesitant about getting vaccinated can join a Zoom call to get their questions answered by a rotating group of about 30 volunteer health-care experts, including pharmacists, family doctors and scientists who offer jargon-free explanations.

---

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.