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CPhA

CPhA webinar explores pandemic's impact on women in pharmacy

As COVID-19 continues to disrupt so many facets of life, a new virtual session from the Canadian Pharmacists Association's Women in Pharmacy Leadership Empowerment Panel series provided a candid discussion about how the pandemic affects women working in pharmacy, reports [Canadian Healthcare Network](#) (subscriber access required). [Hidden burdens: The impacts of COVID-19 on women in pharmacy](#) featured a diverse panel of women from different parts of the country who openly shared their personal and professional experiences and how they deal with challenges they have faced during the pandemic. While focused on pharmacy, the panellists' stories about working at home with small children, taking care of aging parents, facing marriage breakdown, changing careers, keeping a business going, and managing anxiety, depression and burnout during the pandemic could apply to women of any profession. The next webinar in the series, [Social capital: Strategic networking for women in leadership](#), will be held on November 18. Registration is free.

Pharmacists as opioid stewards: A showcase of the evidence webinar recording now available

Pharmacists have a key role to play as opioid stewards across Canada. The Opioid Evidence Showcase featured 6 mini-sessions highlighting cutting-edge research that demonstrates the value of pharmacist services in opioid stewardship to both patients and the health system, including a timely qualitative analysis of the impact of pharmacists' opioid prescribing activities enabled by the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (CDSA) exemptions implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. The [recording](#), accredited for 2 CEUs, is now available on our website. CPhA's Virtually Together webinar series continues with [Discrimination and racism in pharmacy part 2: Reflections from the pharmacy sector](#), scheduled for Thursday, November 12 at 2pm.

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

Provincial

Ontario developing plan for 'fair and equitable' COVID-19 vaccine distribution

Amid promising news regarding the development of a COVID-19 vaccine, Ontario's health minister says the province is working to create a "fair and equitable" plan for vaccine distribution, [according to Global News](#). "We do have a group within the Ministry of Health that is making arrangements for when a vaccine is available for distribution, determining the first group of people who will be receiving the vaccine, and so on," said Health Minister Christine Elliott. "There's a lot of work to be done around that, but it's planning that needs to happen to make sure that we have a fair and equitable response for everyone."

National

Made-in-Canada test strips could enable COVID-19 testing in pharmacies

New made-in-Canada test strips used to identify COVID-19 will allow rapid point-of-care testing in remote locations, workplace

settings or pharmacies, [according to Canadian Healthcare Network](#) (subscriber access required). The caveat is that Health Canada rules require the system to be run by a trained laboratory technician. The test strips are thermostable, meaning they don't need refrigeration or cold chain storage during transportation. Developed and made by Precision Biomonitoring, the TRIPLELOCK™ test strips are sold with a battery-powered portable thermocycler. With this system, results from 9 samples would be available in 1 hour. "It is a system that could be deployed in a pharmacy," says Dr. Mario Thomas, CEO of Precision Biomonitoring. "All you need is 3 feet of counter space to install the thermocycler."

Developing a COVID-19 vaccine is just the first step — distribution presents a whole new challenge

Pfizer's experimental COVID-19 vaccine has emerged as the leading candidate to halt the pandemic, but distributing it or any other vaccines poses massive logistical challenges that will test Canada's health supply chain infrastructure and expose its weaknesses in the days and months ahead, [reports the Globe and Mail](#). McKesson, a leading health care distributor in North America, is warning that Canada's existing public and private vaccination delivery systems aren't ready for a successful and widespread vaccination program and notes that the special handling and storage required for the most promising vaccines and the sheer volume of doses to be distributed threaten to "overwhelm existing infrastructure."

PM says Canada preparing for effective vaccine in 2021

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau says he sees "the light at the end of the tunnel" of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic after seeing the news that Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine candidate may be substantially effective and ready for distribution in early 2021, [reports CTV](#). However, he is urging people not to let down their guards because data that suggests the vaccine may be 90% effective at preventing COVID-19 is preliminary and it could still be several months before any vaccine candidates are ready for mass distribution.

Clear messaging, safe options key to fighting COVID-19 fatigue

With COVID-19 cases rising in parts of the country, tightened restrictions are causing some Canadians to abandon the safety precautions they've been obeying for months, [says CBC](#). While it's not ideal timing to surrender to COVID fatigue — British Columbia and Ontario both have reported record-high case numbers— experts aren't surprised to see attitudes ranging from apathetic to angry as people respond to restrictions.

Canada updates COVID-19 guidelines on risk of airborne spread

Canada has revised its guidelines on how COVID-19 spreads to include the risk of aerosol transmission, weeks after other countries and international health organizations acknowledged the airborne threat of the coronavirus [reports CBC](#). The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) updated its guidance last week, making mention of the risk of transmission from aerosols — or microscopic airborne particles — for the first time. "SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, spreads from an infected person to others through respiratory droplets and aerosols created when an infected person coughs, sneezes, sings, shouts, or talks," the updated guidance says.

Ottawa begins shipping test kits to measure COVID-19 exposure across Canada

Canada has begun its largest effort so far to determine how many people in the country have had COVID-19, [says the Globe and Mail](#). For the project, led by the federally appointed COVID-19 immunity task force, 48,000 finger-prick blood collection kits will be shipped to individuals across the country over the coming months. Those who receive the kits will be asked to respond to an online questionnaire and provide blood spots to be checked for the presence of antibodies that can indicate whether they have been infected with the coronavirus during the past several months. The goal is to reveal the extent to which COVID-19 has penetrated different segments of the Canadian population and regions.

Majority of Canadians support temporary night curfews if necessary: poll

A new public opinion survey suggests that 2 out of 3 Canadians would support temporary nighttime curfews if the COVID-19 pandemic continues to grow, [reports Radio Canada International](#). The Leger and the Association for Canadian Studies survey found that majorities in all age groups — in every part of the country — backed the idea if the COVID-19 pandemic was severe

and public health officials recommended it. The findings appear to be in keeping with previous surveys that showed that Canadians tend to accept government anti-COVID-19 rules without a great deal of disagreement, though sometimes they find the warnings overblown, more readily than Americans.

International

APhA asking new administration to maintain authorities granted under COVID-19

The American Pharmacists Association (APhA) is [asking the Biden administration](#) to maintain the authorities granted under the COVID-19 public health emergency so pharmacists can continue providing enhanced care and services to patients, including testing, treating, immunization and telehealth. “During the pandemic, pharmacists temporarily secured expanded authority to serve their patients. It has made a difference,” says Scott Knoer, CEO of APhA. “Now is the time to reform payment mechanisms and remove regulatory barriers to ensure that patients continue to have access to all vital services that pharmacists are trained to provide — during the pandemic and after.”

Pharmacy will be vital in delivery of COVID-19 vaccine: RPS

Following the news that COVID-19 vaccinations could be provided by the National Health Service (NHS) from as early as next month, Sandra Gidley, president of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS), [says pharmacy teams are ready](#) to support vaccination programs against COVID-19 when new vaccines become available after safety standards are met. “Pharmacy has a track record of delivering vaccination programs across the health care system and must be involved in providing COVID-19 vaccines to enable the widest possible access for patients. We recognize the impact this could have on teams already stretched to capacity, but through collaboration with primary care colleagues we can help ensure an agile and flexible approach to vaccine provision across the country,” she says.

Pharmacists urge people to self-isolate when awaiting COVID-19 test results

Pharmacists are [increasingly concerned](#) that people awaiting COVID-19 test results continue to present at pharmacies, and the Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU) is reiterating the message that anyone awaiting COVID-19 test results must self-isolate, which means staying indoors and completely avoiding contact with other people. The IPU says this includes not visiting your pharmacy, which will help to protect others. Community pharmacist and IPU Executive Committee member Caitriona O’Riordan says, “We fully understand that people have become even more reliant on their local community pharmacy during the pandemic, as we are the most accessible health care providers and have played a critical role in supporting people during this health crisis. However, we urge people to follow Health Service Executive (HSE) advice and to self-isolate while awaiting COVID-19 test results. This includes not visiting your pharmacy in person under any circumstances.”

The devastating effects of ‘long COVID’

Most people recover from COVID-19 within 2 weeks; however, early figures show that around 10% of people are still unwell after 3 weeks, and a smaller proportion are sick for months, [reports the Pharmaceutical Journal](#). As infections begin to rise steeply once again, ‘long COVID’ is beginning to be taken seriously.

COVID-19 vaccine from Pfizer and BioNTech is strongly effective, early data from large trial indicate

Pfizer and its partner BioNTech reported that their COVID-19 vaccine is strongly effective, exceeding expectations with results that are likely to be met with cautious excitement — and relief — in the face of the global pandemic, [STAT says](#). The vaccine is the first to be tested in the US to generate late-stage data. The companies said an early analysis of results showed individuals who received 2 injections 3 weeks apart experienced more than 90% fewer cases of symptomatic COVID-19 than those who received a placebo.

Why Pfizer’s ultra-cold COVID-19 vaccine will not be at the local pharmacy any time soon

Work to distribute the experimental COVID-19 vaccine developed by Pfizer and BioNTech is gearing up after the companies announced successful interim data, but it will not be coming to local pharmacies for the general public any time soon, [Reuters reports](#). The vaccine’s complex and super-cold storage requirements are an obstacle for even the most sophisticated hospitals

in the US and may impact when and where it is available in rural areas or poor countries where resources are tight. The main issue is that the vaccine, which is based on a novel technology that uses synthetic mRNA to activate the immune system against the virus, needs to be kept at -70°C (-94°F) or below.

Delivery timetable for Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine slips, UK official says

The timetable for delivering the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine candidate has slipped and the UK will receive just 4 million doses of the shot this year, [Reuters writes](#). The UK agreed in May to take 100 million doses of the vaccine, developed by Oxford University and licensed to AstraZeneca, with 30 million doses estimated for delivery by September 2020. Oxford's trial chief said last week that he now hoped they would come by the end of the year, though the exact timing is unclear.

Eli Lilly's COVID-19 antibody drug gets FDA green light

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorized use of an Eli Lilly antibody drug as the first treatment for people with earlier-stage COVID-19 who are not hospitalized, filling a gap in treatment, [the Wall Street Journal reports](#). The drug, bamlanivimab, should be used for patients ages 12 and up with mild to moderate COVID-19, based on a study showing it helped improve symptoms and kept many patients out of the hospital. A study, however, found it showed no clinical benefit for hospitalized patients.

Biden transition team announces COVID-19 task force

President-elect Joe Biden's transition team announced the group of public health experts who will make up his COVID-19 advisory board, which include Rick Bright, an immunologist from the Trump administration who alleged that his early warnings about the pandemic were ignored and ultimately led to his removal, [according to CNN](#). The inclusion of Bright, who said that he was met with skepticism when he raised concerns in the early throes of the pandemic about critical supplies shortages, is a clear signal of the contrasted direction that Biden intends to take his administration when it comes to dealing with the pandemic.

Newsworthy

Governments must make sure everything's in place for a COVID-19 vaccine

The [news that a safe, effective vaccine may actually be in sight](#) comes as a very welcome sign that there is hope after all, as the days grow shorter and fears grow larger, [writes the Toronto Star in an editorial](#). And yet the announcement by drug makers Pfizer and BioNTech that early evidence suggests its vaccine is 90% effective in preventing COVID-19, with no adverse effects, comes with its own set of challenges — challenges that governments across Canada cannot afford to bungle.

Worth Repeating

"Getting the vaccine into people's arms will be a Herculean task." — the *Globe and Mail's* André Picard on [hope for a COVID-19 vaccine](#), though the details are scant and the caveats are many.

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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