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CPhA

Recording now available: Women in Pharmacy Leadership Empowerment Panel — Hidden burdens: The impact of COVID-19 on women in pharmacy

The recording for our first Women in Pharmacy Leadership Empowerment Panel, Hidden burdens: The impact of COVID-19 on women in pharmacy, is now available. Sponsored by Shoppers Drug Mart, the panel was moderated by Kelly Grindrod, associate professor at the University of Waterloo School of Pharmacy and CPhA's 2020 Canadian Pharmacist of the Year, and featured a powerful discussion with a diverse panel of pharmacists from across Canada sharing their unique experiences dealing with the impact of COVID-19 on them as women in pharmacy. Watch the recording on [our website](#).

CPhA brings together MPs and pharmacists for virtual roundtables to discuss flu season amidst COVID-19

Last week CPhA held 3 virtual roundtables that brought together Members of Parliament and local pharmacists to discuss how flu campaigns are unfolding across Canada. During the roundtable, pharmacists from across the country shared their experiences managing this year's flu season, including the big increase in demand for vaccinations, extra safety measures and precautions put in place due to COVID-19, and other challenges such as insufficient vaccine supply allocated to pharmacies. Each roundtable also discussed the potential arrival of COVID-19 vaccines in 2021, the role pharmacists could play, and some of the considerations and challenges that need to be addressed. Attendees included Parliamentary Secretary Darren Fisher, Chair of the Health Committee Ron McKinnon, Sonia Sidhu, Raj Saini and Tony Van Bynen from the Liberal Party; Health Critic Don Davies, Carol Hughes and Leah Gazan from the NDP; and Shadow Health Minister Michelle Rempel Garner, Larry Maguire and John Barlow from the Conservative Party.

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

Provincial

NBPA heartened to see work of pharmacists during pandemic recognized in Throne Speech

The New Brunswick Speech from the Throne delivered on November 17 included commitments to renew the health care system by better using resources like pharmacists, [says the New Brunswick Pharmacists' Association](#) (NBPA), with the pandemic an example of how pharmacists are filling the health care gap. "I was heartened to see the hard work of pharmacists on the frontlines during the ongoing pandemic recognized in the Speech from the Throne," says Christine Boudreau, president of NBPA. "COVID has certainly shown that patients and other health care providers can count on pharmacists to be there when they need them. Pharmacists and their teams are helping to fill gaps in the health care system during the pandemic and showing the important role they can play in improving access to primary care." The association was also reassured by the commitment to "leverage all resources within the health-care network in new ways, from doctors to pharmacists, and nursing professionals across the province."

Provinces hold off on use of rapid COVID tests

More than 3.8 million rapid tests for COVID-19 are now in the hands of provincial health authorities, but many jurisdictions are still evaluating how the devices might help battle the pandemic, [says the Canadian Press](#). Health Canada has approved more than 3 dozen different tests for COVID-19, but only 6 of them are “point-of-care” versions, more commonly referred to as rapid tests. The “gold-standard” COVID-19 tests need to be processed in a lab and usually take at least a day to provide results. Rapid tests can be processed in the same place a patient is tested, sometimes in as few as 15 minutes, but they are generally considered less reliable than lab results.

National

UW pharmacy professor Kelly Grindrod urges ‘cautious optimism’ on promising COVID-19 vaccine candidates

As the race towards a viable COVID-19 vaccine continues, 2 potentially viable options have emerged ahead of the pack – from pharmaceutical giant Pfizer and American biotechnology company Moderna. With recent press releases from both companies touting a 90% and 95% effectiveness against the virus, respectively, University of Waterloo professor in pharmacy and Canadian Pharmacist of the Year Kelly Grindrod [spoke with Kitchener Today](#), urging the public to remain cautiously optimistic and stressing the importance of avoiding what’s being termed as “science by press release.”

Tam warns of increasing pressure on hospitals as COVID-19 cases continue to rise

The rising tide of COVID-19 infections across much of Canada threatens to swamp a hospital system already under strain, the country’s top doctor warned on November 14 amid case numbers that continue to set records in long-standing virus hot spots, [says the Canadian Press](#). Chief Public Health Officer Dr. Theresa Tam described the situation in Western Canada, Quebec and Ontario as “worrisome” hours after the provinces posted new single-day highs for provincial case counts. The soaring numbers there and beyond, she contended, have the potential to overtax the country’s hospitals. “This situation... it is putting pressure on local healthcare resources,” she said in a statement. “Hospitals are being forced to make the difficult decision to cancel elective surgeries and procedures in areas of the country to manage (increases).”

Canadian military prepares to help with COVID-19 vaccine distribution

The Canadian military says it is making plans to play a role in the eventual rollout of COVID-19 vaccines nationwide, [reports CTV](#). As positive news about potential vaccines continues to make headlines, there are already military teams “fully integrated” with the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) on planning for what’s set to be a Herculean effort: getting vaccines into the arms of millions of Canadians once Health Canada approves them. During a House of Commons National Defence Committee meeting on November 16, Canadian Armed Forces Strategic Joint Staff Director of Staff Major Gen. Trevor Cadieu said the military will play a role in that effort.

Growing number of Canadians plan to get vaccinated for COVID-19

A new poll suggests that the proportion of Canadians planning to get vaccinated for COVID-19 is on the rise after encouraging initial results from Pfizer’s vaccine trial, [reports the Canadian Press](#). According to a survey by Léger and the Association for Canadian Studies, 69% of respondents said they plan to get inoculated against COVID-19 once Health Canada approves a vaccine that is broadly available and free. The number is a jump from the 63% who said they would take up such an offer a month ago, and a return to levels of vaccine enthusiasm reported in a similar poll in July. Nonetheless, 22% of respondents said they do not intend to receive doses of the Pfizer vaccine in particular if it were ready in the spring, despite early results that suggest a 90% efficacy rate. Another 22% said they do not know.

Canadian manufacturers, supply chain gearing up for distribution of future COVID-19 vaccine

With a second large pharmaceutical company announcing promising trial results for a potential COVID-19 vaccine, Canadian companies are gearing up to pitch in to support the logistical challenges of storing millions of doses in hyper-cold temperatures. Guelph, Ontario-based Danby, maker of compact appliances such as fridges, freezers, microwaves and air conditioners, will soon announce the production of a new line of -80°C freezers, company CEO and owner Jim Estill [told CTV News](#). Estill expects super-cold storage will be required in hospitals, pharmacies and courier hubs across Canada to handle an estimated 70 million

vials of vaccines that require 2 doses for each recipient.

Doctors push aggressive strategy to get COVID-19 cases down to zero

Canada needs a new and aggressive strategy to reduce COVID-19 cases to zero, a group of doctors and infectious disease experts is urging, as the rates of infection reached record highs in various parts of the country and hospitalizations and deaths continue to rise, [reports the Globe and Mail](#). Andrew Morris, an infectious diseases specialist at Toronto's Sinai Health and University Health Network, says brief and sporadic circuit breakers will only prolong the pain, and the country's current approach has resulted in "muddled communication," with various regions grappling with different acceptable rates of infection. Instead, he and his colleagues, who have taken to social media under the hashtag #COVIDzero, are calling on governments and public health officials to work together to stamp out community spread of the virus altogether — a goal that requires longer and stricter restrictions in the interim.

International

FIP COVID guidance document updated

The International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) has updated its [guidance document on COVID-19](#) clinical information for pharmacists with up to date information on vaccines, remdesivir and convalescent plasma.

Chains, independents partner with HHS to distribute COVID-19 vaccine

Several leading US pharmacy chains and independent pharmacy networks are working with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to expand access to future COVID-19 vaccines, [reports Canadian Healthcare Network](#) (subscriber access required). The agency, via the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, announced the second phase of its Federal Pharmacy Partnership Strategy for COVID-19. "Ensuring access and affordability of the COVID-19 vaccine for all Americans is a top priority for the Trump Administration," said HHS Secretary Alex Azar. "We are leveraging the existing private sector infrastructure to get safe and effective vaccines supported by Operation Warp Speed into communities and into arms as quickly as possible with no out-of-pocket costs. The vast majority of Americans live within 5 miles of a pharmacy, and our new agreement with pharmacy partners across America is a critical step toward making sure all Americans have access to safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines when they are available." The chains involved in the partnership represent roughly 60% of the pharmacies in the 50 states, District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands, according to HHS.

Pharmacy groups praise pharmacist preparedness in COVID-19 vaccine administration

Pharmacy organizations, including the National Association of Chain Drug Stores (NACDS), the American Pharmacists Association (APhA) and the National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA) are recognizing pharmacies and their pharmacist teams for preparing to administer a COVID-19 vaccine when it becomes available, [Drug Store News says](#). This news comes on the heels of a recent HHS announcement regarding national and regional chain pharmacies' and independent pharmacies' role in increasing access to future COVID-19 vaccinations. "This announcement once again recognizes pharmacies as key access points across the country for distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine," said Scott Knoer, executive vice president and CEO of APhA. "Optimizing delivery of these important vaccines and utilizing immunization services provided by qualified pharmacists and pharmacy team members supports our nation's goal of protecting individuals and communities from vaccine-preventable diseases. Pharmacists stand ready and able to address the public health needs of our communities."

Pfizer ends COVID-19 trial with 95% efficacy, to seek emergency-use authorization

On November 18 Pfizer announced that the final results from the late-stage trial of its COVID-19 vaccine show it is 95% effective, adding it has the required 2 months of safety data and will apply for emergency US authorization within days, [Reuters says](#). The drug maker said that the efficacy of the vaccine, developed with German partner BioNTech, is consistent across age and ethnicity demographics, and that there are no major side effects, a sign that the immunization could be employed broadly around the world. Efficacy in adults over 65 years, who are at particular risk from the virus, was over 94%.

Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine is strongly effective, early look at data show

Moderna's vaccine against COVID-19 is strongly effective, [the company said](#) on November 16, building excitement about the potential of controlling the global pandemic, [reports STAT](#). The news comes exactly a week after [results](#) from Pfizer and BioNTech, which announced broadly similar results. The Moderna vaccine reduced the risk of COVID-19 infection by 94.5%. There were 95 cases of infection among patients who received placebo in the company's 30,000-patient study. There were only 5 infections in patients who developed COVID-19 after receiving Moderna's vaccine.

Germany to set up hundreds of vaccination centres

German states plan to set up hundreds of vaccination centres across the country starting in December, [DW reports](#). Health ministers of the 16 federal states have drawn up plans to create 1 to 2 centres per administrative district — totaling hundreds of centres — as well as employ mobile vaccination teams. Berlin alone is planning to set up 6 such centres. Large exhibition halls, mostly out of use since the beginning of the pandemic, are being discussed as potential spaces to house some centres.

Pfizer to start pilot program for COVID-19 immunization in 4 US states

Pfizer says it is starting a pilot program for COVID-19 immunization in 4 US states to help refine the plan for the delivery and deployment of its vaccine candidate, [Reuters reports](#). The US drug maker says it had selected Rhode Island, Texas, New Mexico and Tennessee for the program because of their differences in overall size, diversity of populations and immunization infrastructure, as well as the states' need to reach individuals in varied urban and rural settings. "The 4 states included in this pilot program will not receive vaccine doses earlier than other states by virtue of this pilot, nor will they receive any differential consideration," Pfizer said in a statement.

Janssen to begin final stage trials of coronavirus candidate in the UK

Britain will be the first country to run final stage trials of an experimental COVID-19 vaccine being developed by the pharmaceutical company Janssen, a subsidiary of Johnson & Johnson, [Reuters says](#). Scientists will recruit some 6000 people across the UK for the 12-month trial. The research will begin in Britain, but aims to recruit a total of 30,000 people in 6 countries around the world. The shot will use a harmless cold virus to deliver the spike protein of the coronavirus into the body, which scientists hope will prompt an immune response.

Vaccine alliance secures \$2 billion to fund COVID shots for poor nations

The COVAX facility set up by the World Health Organization (WHO) and GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance has exceeded an interim target of raising more than \$2 billion to buy and distribute COVID-19 vaccines for poorer countries, but says it still needs more, [Reuters writes](#). The funds for an advance market commitment will allow COVAX to buy an initial 1 billion vaccine doses for 92 eligible countries that would not otherwise be able to afford them, but another \$5 billion will be needed in 2021.

US hospitals to restrict Lilly COVID-19 antibody treatment due to limited supply

Due to high demand and tight supplies, hospitals in the US may limit use of a new Eli Lilly antibody drug to COVID-19 patients with multiple risk factors for serious illness or to those whose immune systems have not begun to fight the infection, [Reuters reports](#). The treatment, bamlanivimab, was given US emergency use authorization last week by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for helping newly diagnosed, high-risk patients avoid hospitalization.

Newsworthy

Canada has hedged its bets on COVID-19 vaccines

Canada has secured access to a total of 414 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines from different sources. But more important, [the Conversation reports](#), Canada has ensured that it has diversified the types of vaccines it will have.

Worth Repeating

"So far Canada has, as per our national character, largely embraced a middle-of-the-road philosophy — shut down, but not too tight or for very long — with predictably mediocre results." — The *Globe and Mail's* Andr   Picard, [writing](#) on whether we need a strict second lockdown to beat the virus.

“We might be tired of COVID-19 but it’s not tired of us. The virus has no ideology or beliefs; its only goal is to spread.” — Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, director-general of the WHO, [speaking at the Empire Club of Canada](#) where he said Canada deserves praise for its efforts to fight COVID-19 both at home and abroad as well as for its commitment to public health.

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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