

From: Public & Professional Affairs Department
Sent: October 7, 2020 4:37 PM
Subject: The Weekly: CPhA's COVID-19 Update for October 7



October 7, 2020

NOTE: The Weekly will not be published next week. Our next issue will be sent on Wednesday, October 14.

CPhA

CPhA continues to focus on influenza season, encouraging patients to be prepared for a different experience this year due to COVID-19

As flu shots begin to arrive at pharmacies across Canada, CPhA is encouraging patients to be prepared for a different experience at the pharmacy this year. In a [news release](#) on October 5 ([en français](#)), CPhA's Shelita Dattani highlights some things patients should expect this year, including the potential for appointment-based flu shots, new safety procedures and screening processes. She also notes that while governments have ordered additional vaccines to meet an expected increase in demand, "Pharmacies in many jurisdictions have started to receive their first batches and will continue to receive supply over the coming weeks, so we ask patients to be patient as this historic demand is met." CPhA continues to update our 2020/2021 Influenza Season information for pharmacists on our website in [English](#) and [French](#).

Virtually Together series continues: Upcoming webinar and recording now available

CPhA's fall webinar series, Virtually Together, continues this week with our next session, ***Discrimination and racism in the pharmacy profession part 1: Experiences from the front line***. Join us on Thursday, October 8 from 12-1:30pm ET as our panellists from across the country begin a conversation on how discrimination and racism have impacted them, both personally and professionally. [Registration is open](#) and free for all. And in case you missed the live session, the recording of our first session, *Pharmacy's future: How COVID-19 is changing public behaviour and what that means for pharmacy* is now [available on our website](#).

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

Provincial

Q & A with the experts: COVID-19 testing in pharmacies

A new [Q & A with the Waterloo Chronicle](#) features Kelly Grindrod and Nancy Waite, both pharmacists and professors at the School of Pharmacy at the University of Waterloo, discussing COVID-19 testing in pharmacies. Dr. Grindrod is CPhA's 2020 Canadian Pharmacist of the Year award winner. Both she and Dr. Waite conduct research examining the role of pharmacists in the health care system and have been working with CPhA on developing a national framework for the role of pharmacists in public health.

Ontario is sending COVID-19 pharmacy swabs to California lab for processing

Swabs from COVID-19 tests being done at Ontario pharmacies are being sent to a lab in California for analysis before being shipped back to Canada, [CBC News says](#). Ontario is dealing with a severe backlog of coronavirus tests during this second wave of the pandemic. According to Ontario's Ministry of Health, the backlog of tests was 68,000 this past weekend. Dozens of Ontario

pharmacies have been doing testing since September 25, and the specimens collected are shipped to Quest Diagnostics' infectious disease lab in southern California, says Isaac Gould, the CEO of In Common Labs (ICL).

National

Health Canada approves first rapid antigen COVID-19 test

On October 6, Health Canada regulators approved another rapid COVID-19 test — the first antigen device to receive the necessary approvals for use in this country, [CBC reports](#). US-based Abbott Laboratories can now sell and distribute the Panbio COVID-19 Ag Rapid Test Device, which can produce results in less than 20 minutes. The test is advertised as a solution for mass testing in “decentralized settings.” Health Canada has authorized it as a point of care test, meaning it can be used by trained professionals in pharmacies, walk-in clinics or doctors' offices.

A COVID vaccine has entered Canada's authorization process. What happens now?

Canada's quest to provide its citizens with a vaccine against COVID-19 reached a critical milestone when Health Canada announced that [AstraZeneca](#) is the first company to propose that its vaccine be authorized, [iPolitics reports](#). “This is an important step for Canada in its response to the pandemic, but it is just one step on the road to obtaining safe and effective vaccines,” Health Canada writes in a statement. AstraZeneca's vaccine, AZD1222, will now begin its journey through the expedited approval process the government has established for COVID-19 vaccines and treatments.

Health Canada looking into private clinics offering COVID-19 tests

Health Canada is looking into reports that a number of for-profit health clinics are administering COVID-19 tests to Canadians looking to bypass long wait times, going against the essence of the country's universal health care system, [CTV News says](#). In a press briefing in Ottawa on October 5, Health Minister Patty Hajdu said she has spoken with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau about individuals accessing COVID-19 tests for around \$250 and his concerns that this violates the *Canada Health Act*. Hajdu noted that her department is looking into it, but that “generally no, we prefer that there isn't a two-tier public health system. In fact, the law says explicitly that that should not exist and we have a number of measures that we can take under the Canada Health Act if that's happening,” she said.

Trudeau promises federal help for COVID hot spots in Quebec, Ontario, Alberta

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has promised more support for local public health units in emerging COVID-19 hot spots, some of which are struggling with testing backlogs and a contact tracing system that can't keep up with the number of new cases being reported, [CBC News reports](#). Trudeau told reporters that the government has signed agreements with Quebec, Ontario and Alberta to supply federal bureaucrats to help those provinces with their contact tracing — the process of connecting with people who may have been in close contact with a positive case of the novel coronavirus. Contact tracers urge those who may have been exposed to self-isolate or get a test to avoid further spread, but their work can be undermined by delays in contacting those at-risk people.

Tam urges Thanksgiving caution amid recent rise in cases of COVID-19

Canada's top public health officer is urging people to plan ahead to make sure this year's Thanksgiving holiday is safe during the COVID-19 pandemic, [according to the Canadian Press](#). Dr. Theresa Tam says that indoor gatherings should be kept small, especially in parts of the country where infection rates are high. She also notes that people celebrating outdoors should follow physical distancing guidelines and she encourages people to avoid sharing food and other objects during their meals.

Study finds 39% of Canadians say they would immediately get COVID-19 vaccine if available

Fewer than half of Canadians report that they would want to immediately get vaccinated once a COVID-19 vaccine is available, according to polling data released and [reported by Bloomberg News](#). A study released by the Angus Reid Institute (ARI) found that just 39% of Canadians say they'd immediately seek out a possible vaccine, while another 38% said they would seek out the vaccine, but not right away. The data marks a downturn nearly nationwide from a similar poll conducted by the institute in late July. Every province except Saskatchewan saw fewer respondents willing to immediately get vaccinated, led by a 13% dip in

Alberta.

International

Pharmacy teams unable to get COVID-19 tests despite priority status

Some community pharmacy workers are struggling to get a COVID-19 test, despite their “essential workers” status, [C+D has learned from pharmacy bodies](#). A Twitter poll of 79 respondents, posted in mid-September by Royal Pharmaceutical Society director for England Ravi Sharma, found that 76% of pharmacy workers had experienced difficulties in accessing tests for COVID-19. Other pharmacy bodies have reported similar problems. Leyla Hannbeck, chief executive officer of the Association of Independent Multiple Pharmacies (AIMp), confirmed that the organization has received “many concerns about this issue.” It is something she has raised with NHS England and asked them to look into.

US pharmacists in top tier for COVID-19 vaccine administration

The American Pharmacists Association (APhA) [tweeted a thank you](#) to the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) for responding to its recommendations by putting pharmacists administering COVID-19 vaccines in the top tier priority, recognizing pharmacists as a key vaccine access point. The NASEM [released the final report](#) of a consensus study recommending a 4-phased equitable allocation framework that the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and state, tribal, local, and territorial (STLT) authorities should adopt in the development of national and local guidelines for COVID-19 vaccine allocation.

Trump is receiving dexamethasone, a steroid usually given to patients with severe COVID-19

To treat his COVID-19, US President Donald Trump has started receiving dexamethasone, a common steroid that has been shown to be helpful in people with severe cases of the disease, but that doctors warn should not be used early in the course of the illness, [STAT reports](#). Dexamethasone is generally reserved for patients who have serious disease. The National Institutes of Health’s [treatment guidelines for COVID-19](#) say dexamethasone should be used only in hospitalized patients who are on ventilators or who require supplemental oxygen and specifically “recommends against using dexamethasone for the treatment of COVID-19 in patients who do not require supplemental oxygen.”

WHO: 10% of world’s people may have been infected with virus

The head of emergencies at the World Health Organization (WHO) said the agency’s “best estimates” indicate roughly 1 in 10 people worldwide may have been infected by the coronavirus — more than 20 times the number of confirmed cases — and warned of a difficult period ahead, [according to the Associated Press](#). Dr. Michael Ryan, speaking to a special session of the WHO’s 34-member executive board focusing on COVID-19, said that the figures vary from urban to rural areas and between different groups, but that ultimately it means “the vast majority of the world remains at risk.” He said the pandemic would continue to evolve, but that tools exist to suppress transmission and save lives.

FDA discloses vaccine guidelines blocked by White House

On October 6 the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) laid out updated safety standards for makers of COVID-19 vaccines after the White House blocked their formal release, the latest political tug-of-war between the Trump administration and the government’s public health scientists, [the Associated Press says](#). In briefing documents posted on its website, the FDA said vaccine makers should follow trial participants for at least 2 months to rule out safety issues before seeking emergency approval. That requirement would almost certainly preclude the introduction of a vaccine before November 3.

EMA committee probes possible kidney injury from remdesivir

A European Medicines Agency safety committee is reviewing reports of acute kidney injury in some COVID-19 patients who had been given remdesivir, [Reuters writes](#). At this point, the regulator said it was not clear whether there is a causal relationship between the Gilead Sciences drug and the reports of acute kidney injury and that the safety committee will review all available data to find that out. The agency noted that kidney injury can be caused by COVID-19, as well as other factors such as diabetes.

Newsworthy

The COVID Alert app is a key tool in our fight against the virus, but a profound mistrust in big tech is leading Canadians to avoid it

We have tools to combat the virus — social distancing, masks, handwashing — and, of course, the COVID Alert app made available by the federal government. But the app has seen disappointing uptake. By last count at the beginning of September, it was at only 2.2 million downloads in Ontario, a province of nearly 15 million people. With a second wave of the pandemic decidedly here, why are we avoiding one of the key tools to help us fight it? [The Toronto Star](#) examines the possible reasons why.

Worth Repeating

“Make our celebration large in thanks, large in gratitude, but small in size.” — B.C.’s Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry on how to give thanks this upcoming weekend, without giving COVID a chance to spread.

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.

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.