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CPhA

CPhA urges expanding COVID-19 asymptomatic testing to pharmacies

CPhA is [encouraging](#) governments to pursue enhanced testing strategies to increase access for Canadians, noting that expanding asymptomatic COVID-19 testing to pharmacies across Canada could increase capacity by thousands of patients each day. According to a [new survey](#) conducted by Abacus Data and commissioned by CPhA, nearly a third of Canadians would be more comfortable sending their kids back to school if COVID-19 tests were available at more locations. “Increasing testing is critical to limit the spread of COVID-19,” says Shelita Dattani, CPhA’s director of knowledge translation and practice development. “With more than 11,000 locations across the country, many in rural and remote areas, pharmacies can make testing more accessible to Canadians, and help communities restart schools and re-open their economies safely.”

CPhA launches influenza season resources for pharmacists

In conjunction with last week’s highly successful webinar, Preparing for Flu Season: Suggested Best Practices for Community Pharmacy, CPhA has launched our [Suggested Best Practices for Community Pharmacy: Providing Influenza Immunizations During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) and [Influenza Season: 2020/2021: Information and resources](#) web pages to provide pharmacists with the information, tools and resources they need to safely and effectively prepare for the 2020/2021 influenza season amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Both pages will be updated regularly and are also available in French at [La grippe 2020/2021 : Pratiques exemplaires proposée aux les pharmacies communautaires : Pour la vaccination contre la grippe durant la pandémie de COVID-19](#) and [Saison Grippale 2020-2021: Information et ressources](#).

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

Provincial

Pharmacists ‘ready’ to help with COVID-19 testing

The CEO of the Ontario Pharmacists Association (OPA) says pharmacists are willing and ready to start testing people for COVID-19 who aren’t showing any symptoms. Justin Bates was speaking on Toronto’s [NEWSTALK 1010](#) and said they hope to roll out the program in the “coming weeks” in hot spots around the province. The model would mean pharmacies could opt-in to perform tests. It wouldn’t be mandatory. “I think it’s important that we leverage that high accessibility, and tap into the expertise of pharmacists. They’re ready,” said Bates.

Quebec provides pandemic PPE funding for community pharmacies during flu season

Quebec will compensate pharmacy owners for the personal protective equipment (PPE) they need to prepare to vaccinate patients this season, according to [Canadian Healthcare Network](#) (subscriber access only). In recent weeks, the Association québécoise des pharmaciens propriétaires (AQPP) has been in negotiations with the government. The cost of PPE and the changes to the pharmacy required to vaccinate customers are examples of the financial burdens facing pharmacist-owners, says

AQPP executive vice president and CEO Jean Bourcier. According to Canadian Healthcare Network's Quebec-based website, [ProfessionSanté](#), the government will also reimburse part of the cost of the vaccination training, which runs approximately \$2,500 per pharmacist.

National

McKesson Canada prepares to support the distribution of a future COVID-19 vaccine in Canada

McKesson Canada is preparing to safely deliver future COVID-19 vaccines to communities and Canadians across the country, according to a [news release](#). "We are a natural partner for government to ready Canada for a future COVID-19 vaccine," says Rebecca McKillican, CEO, McKesson Canada. "For over 100 years, McKesson Canada has worked with leading pharmaceutical manufacturers to deliver medications and complex therapies to Canadians, including those companies with a potential COVID-19 vaccine." McKesson Canada is the only pharmaceutical distributor in the country with existing Health Canada-licensed infrastructure that reaches every province and territory and is uniquely positioned to ensure the safe and effective delivery of a COVID-19 vaccine once it becomes available.

Shoppers CEO: COVID-19 shows Canadians need new ways to get access to care

Loblaw is investing \$75 million in virtual health provider Maple Corporation as the company continues to expand its footprint in health care, [reports PostMedia](#). Shoppers Drug Mart president Jeff Leger says the pandemic has shown that Canadians need alternatives to traditional health care. "The COVID-19 pandemic has proven that Canadians need new ways, particularly virtual ways, to get access to care," says Leger. "We know that the future of healthcare is digitally enabled. We believe that our store network and infrastructure, combined with Maple's technology can help better connect Canadians to the healthcare support they need, whenever and wherever they are."

Pressure mounts on Health Canada to approve rapid COVID testing devices

With a sudden spike in cases prompting more people to get tested, Canadians are coping with hours-long lineups at COVID-19 testing centres across the country — and some medical experts are calling on Health Canada to approve new devices to deliver faster results, [says the CBC](#). Concerned parents and their children faced 4-hour waits at Ottawa's primary testing facility on September 14. Dr. Theresa Tam, Canada's chief public health officer, says that one approach to the crush of people looking for tests could be the deployment of rapid-testing devices. Seven months into this pandemic, these devices still are not available for use in Canada because Health Canada regulators haven't yet approved them.

Trudeau defends COVID-19 response as critics say threat was misjudged

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau defended his government's pandemic response amid criticism that top officials lacked proper intelligence on the outbreak early this year and repeatedly underestimated the threat it posed, [says the Globe and Mail](#). Trudeau says that the federal government became concerned about the novel coronavirus when public health officials learned of the outbreak in early January and convened "high-level" meetings later that month to discuss the situation. However, in responding to questions from reporters, the Prime Minister didn't specifically address why Canada repeatedly declared the virus was a low risk to the country for much of the first 3 months of the year, despite warnings from the World Health Organization that the risk to the world was high.

New management to 'strengthen' pandemic surveillance system

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) has installed new management to oversee and "strengthen" the country's pandemic surveillance system, a once-globally renowned unit whose capabilities were curtailed less than a year before the COVID-19 crisis hit, [the Globe and Mail reports](#). The department says that Brigitte Diogo, a senior official with 25 years of experience in government, has taken over as the vice president of the Health Security Infrastructure Branch. The division oversees the government's pandemic early warning and surveillance unit, known as the Global Public Health Intelligence Network, or GPHIN, among other operations, such as an emergency stockpile of medical supplies.

Feds still open to China-made vaccines

The federal cabinet minister responsible for purchasing Canada's vaccine supply is not ruling out buying from China or Chinese companies, despite an earlier development partnership that fell apart because China's customs wouldn't allow a vaccine candidate to be shipped to Canada, [reports iPOLITICS](#). The now-scraped arrangement with Chinese vaccine developer CanSino would have made the company's fast-progressing vaccine candidate against COVID-19 the first to be approved for testing in human trials in a Canadian lab. "Our vaccine negotiations are proceeding with multiple companies at the current time and primarily on the advice of the vaccine task force," Public Services and Procurement Minister Anita Anand says when asked whether her government would continue pursuing deals with China.

Some Canadians believe officials exaggerate threat of COVID-19, poll suggests

A new survey suggests there are Canadians who believe that warnings from public officials about the threat of COVID-19 are vastly overblown, [reports the Canadian Press](#). Almost one-quarter of respondents in an online poll by Leger and the Association for Canadian Studies say they believe public health and government officials exaggerate in their warnings, including about the need for measures like physical distancing to slow the spread of the pandemic. Regionally, respondents in Alberta were more likely to believe the threat was embellished, followed by Atlantic Canada and Quebec, with Ontario at the bottom.

International

Optimism for a COVID-19 vaccine in 2020

In an interview with [Pharmacy Times](#), National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPHA) CEO Douglas Hoey says he's optimistic about having a vaccine for COVID-19 by the end of the year. Hoey was recently [invited to join Operation Warp Speed](#), the US federal project developing vaccinations for COVID-19. Hoey says the initiative has different arms, including development, distribution and administrative focuses for the vaccinations. Hoey says he is working mainly on the administrative side and notes that pharmacists are particularly well-placed for administering the vaccines. Some may require multiple doses or ultra-cold storage, and pharmacists are already positioned to manage these processes.

Oxford University to resume vaccine trial after pause

Trials of a COVID-19 vaccine being developed by AstraZeneca and Oxford University will resume after being paused due to a reported side effect in a patient in the UK, [says the BBC](#). Last week AstraZeneca says the studies were being paused while it investigated whether the adverse reaction was linked with the vaccine. But on September 12 the university says it had been deemed safe to continue. Health Secretary Matt Hancock welcomed the news that the trials would resume. "This pause shows we will always put safety first. We will back our scientists to deliver an effective vaccine as soon as safely possible," he says.

NIH 'very concerned' about serious side effect in COVID-19 vaccine trial

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is weighing whether to follow UK regulators in resuming a COVID-19 vaccine trial that was halted when a participant suffered spinal cord damage, even as the National Institutes of Health (NIH) has launched an investigation of the case, [Kaiser Health News reports](#). A great deal of uncertainty remains about what happened to the unnamed patient, to the frustration of those avidly following the progress of vaccine testing. AstraZeneca is running the global trial of the vaccine it produced with Oxford University.

Pharma CEO warns that millions worldwide won't get COVID vaccine until 2024

The chief executive of the world's largest vaccine manufacturer says it will take about 4 or 5 years to produce enough COVID-19 vaccines to inoculate everyone in the world. In a video call September 14 with [the Financial Times](#) (subscriber access Only), Adar Poonawalla, CEO of Serum Institute of India (SII), estimated that the feat will require 15 billion doses for a 2-doses-per-person vaccine. But he warned that pharmaceutical manufacturers currently do not have the production capacity to come close to meeting that demand.

Pfizer and BioNTech announce plan to expand COVID-19 vaccine trial

Pfizer and BioNTech are moving to enlarge the Phase 3 trial of their COVID-19 vaccine by 50%, which could allow the companies to collect more safety and efficacy data and to increase the diversity of the study's participants, [says STAT](#). The companies say

that they would increase the size of the study to 44,000 participants, up from an initial recruitment goal of 30,000 individuals. The FDA will have to approve the change before it goes into effect.

Pfizer CEO says company will know if vaccine works by end of October

Pfizer chief executive officer Albert Bourla says there is a “good chance” the company will know whether its COVID-19 vaccine works by the end of October, [CBS News reports](#). Consequently, the company is preparing for approval from the federal government and distribution of a vaccine before the end of the year. So far, Pfizer has already manufactured hundreds of thousands of doses. Pfizer is the only US-based pharmaceutical company that has rejected federal dollars for its vaccine candidate.

US hospitals turn down remdesivir, limit use to sickest COVID-19 patients

US hospitals have turned down about a third of their allocated supplies of remdesivir since July as need for the costly COVID-19 antiviral wanes, [Reuters reports](#). Some hospitals say they are still buying the Gilead Sciences medicine to build inventory in case the pandemic accelerates over the winter, but that current supplies are adequate, in part because they are limiting use to severely ill patients. Six out of 8 major hospital systems report that they were not using it for moderate cases.

WHO urges countries to join COVAX vaccine facility

The World Health Organization (WHO) is imploring countries to join its COVAX vaccine facility by September 18 to help ensure that immunizations are fairly and efficiently distributed, [Reuters reports](#). So far, 92 lower-income nations are seeking assistance via the COVAX facility, part of the WHO’s ACT Accelerator to boost development of vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics to combat the pandemic. Some 80 higher-income nations have expressed interest, but many must still confirm their intention to join by the end of this week.

Newsworthy

Trump pressed for plasma therapy. Officials worry, is an unvetted vaccine next?

An in-depth [feature in the New York Times](#) highlights new details on how US President Donald Trump’s demands for faster action from health agencies help explain the intensifying concern that he could demand pre—Election Day approval of a vaccine.

Worth Repeating

“Just because you may know the people attending an event outside of your household/close-contacts bubble, it doesn’t mean there is a reduced risk of COVID-19,” — Canada’s Chief Public Health Officer Dr. Theresa Tam.

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.