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CPhA

CPhA launches Virtually Together fall webinar series with a look at how COVID-19 is changing consumer behaviour and what that could mean for pharmacy's future

On September 28 CPhA launched our new fall webinar series, [Virtually Together](#), with *Pharmacy's Future: How COVID-19 is changing public behaviour and what that means for pharmacy*. Keynote speaker David Coletto of Abacus Data presented new research looking at consumer trends that have accelerated due to COVID-19 and discussed the implications of these shifts with panellists Afomia Gebre, Gerry Harrington, Kimberley Hanson and Smita Patil. The recording will be available on our website soon and is accredited for 1.5 CEUs. Registration for our next webinar, *Discrimination and racism in the pharmacy profession part 1: Experiences from the front line*, will open this week.

Updated materials for flu season: Best practice guidelines

As you continue to prepare for the [2020/2021 influenza season](#), CPhA is continuing to develop tools, resources and information to support you and your patients. This year, we're encouraging patients to #GetTheFluShot, but making sure they are aware that getting a flu shot at the pharmacy might look different this year. Watch our website for a range of resources, including recent updates to our [Suggested Best Practices for Community Pharmacy: Providing Influenza Immunizations During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#).

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

Provincial

ON prioritizes patients for COVID-19 testing

Ontario has changed its COVID-19 testing guidance to restrict assessment centre testing to those with symptoms of COVID-19, who have had close contact with a confirmed case, who are involved in an outbreak and identified by public health, or who are eligible for testing under an initiative directed by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Long-Term Care, [reports the Ottawa Citizen](#). Last week the province announced that asymptomatic testing will become available by appointment at up to 60 pharmacies in Ontario, and further locations will be added in the weeks to come. A provincial press release published on September 24 says that pharmacy testing will be available for those without symptoms who are "part of a targeted testing initiative directed by the Ministry of Health or the Ministry of Long-Term Care," including people who need a negative test result to visit loved ones in long-term care homes.

Ontario doctors prescribe rollback of re-openings as COVID cases rise

An influential group of doctors and health care leaders are jointly calling on the Ontario government to lock down more of the province in response to higher COVID-19 numbers, [says the Toronto Sun](#). "Given the sharp rise in COVID-19 cases over the last

two weeks, and the speed at which this virus spreads, now is the time to put public health measures in place to immediately limit opportunities for disease transmission,” the letter says. The statement, distributed by the Ontario Hospital Association (OHA), is signed by 38 physicians specializing in infectious diseases, general internal medicine, medical microbiology, and infection prevention and control.

NS company waiting on Health Canada approval for rapid antigen test for COVID-19

The Sona Nanotech lab in Dartmouth, NS, is making history by developing a rapid antigen test for COVID-19, [reports CTV News](#). “There was a moment of tremendous pride for the entire team, as Canadians, when our evaluation results came back from both third-party laboratories and in-field trials and it showed how strongly our test performed,” says CEO David Regan. “The Sona Nanotech test is like a pregnancy test. It’s a lateral flow test and those pregnancy tests detect the existence of a hormone. Our test detects the presence of the coronavirus,” says Regan. Right now, it’s a waiting game for the lab as it seeks approval from Health Canada. In the meantime, the company is also working on a saliva at-home test, which is in the early stages of development.

National

Feds announce plan to buy 7.9 million rapid COVID tests as Health Canada defends slow response

On September 29 the federal government announced a plan to buy 7.9 million point-of-care COVID-19 tests in the months ahead and defended a Health Canada regulatory process that has left the country with few rapid testing devices to deploy as cases mount, [says CBC](#). Public Services and Procurement Minister Anita Anand says the order from US-based Abbott Laboratories is meant to offer other testing options to Canadians at a time when the country’s testing apparatus is being severely strained. While the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has so far approved dozens of rapid testing devices, Health Minister Patty Hajdu says such tests would only be rolled out in Canada once regulators here are sure they are safe to use.

PPE, flu vaccine access concerns for Canadian doctors: survey

As COVID-19 cases continue to surge across Canada, the Canadian Medical Association (CMA) is raising an alarm about the challenges physicians continue to face ahead of a second wave, including obtaining personal protective equipment (PPE) and getting access to the flu vaccine. While there have been improvements in the supply and distribution of PPE, a [survey of CMA members](#) found that 54% of physicians continue to encounter procurement challenges. “We continue to see outbreaks throughout the country and with resurgences of COVID-19 now before us, it’s imperative that governments ensure our front-line workers are protected, not only in hospital settings but also in community practice settings, as they form our first line of defence against this pandemic,” CMA president Dr. Ann Collins said in a [news release](#). More than 86% of physicians who responded to the survey said they fear that the influenza season will put additional strain on the health care system.

COVID Alert app nears 3 million users, but only 514 positive test reports

New numbers from the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) show only a gradual increase of downloads of Canada’s COVID-19 exposure notification app since the start of the month, while the number of Canadians using the tool to report their positive test remains low. The organization told [CTV News](#) on September 29 that the app has been downloaded 2.94 million times since July 31; however, only 514 users, all of whom are located in Ontario, have actually notified the app about their positive test results, despite the province having recorded more than 9,000 cases since the app came into effect. This is up from about 2.2 million downloads and 100 test disclosures in the first active month. The new statistics come as politicians once again ramp up calls for Canadians to download the software amid climbing case counts nationwide.

Canada joins global effort on ensuring widespread access to COVID-19 vaccines

Canada has joined a global effort designed to help deliver equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines in a move that stands in contrast with a decision taken by the United States not to join, [the Globe and Mail reports](#). On September 25 Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced that the federal government will spend approximately \$220 million on the COVAX Facility to procure up to 15 million vaccine doses for Canadians. An additional \$220 million is being earmarked to purchase doses for low- and middle-income countries, the government said, adding that Canada cannot beat the pandemic unless it is addressed

everywhere.

Canada signs deal to secure 20M more COVID-19 vaccine doses

Canada has signed an agreement to secure another 20 million vaccine doses as the global race for a COVID-19 vaccine intensifies, [says the CBC](#). Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced a deal with AstraZeneca on access to a vaccine prospect now being developed at Oxford University. As a result, the federal government has now secured access to 6 leading vaccine candidates. None of the candidates has been shown to work so far. “We’ve been guided by science since the very beginning and right now, both the COVID-19 vaccine task force and the immunity task force are doing important work to help us identify the most promising vaccine options and strategies,” he says.

Rapid testing becoming the new focus in the fight against COVID-19

As new technology for COVID-19 testing hits the market, the international focus has shifted away from the availability of these tests and instead to the speed in which they can produce results, [CTV reports](#). In Canada there are about 12 point-of-care rapid tests still awaiting review, while just 2 have been approved: 1 from Precision Biomonitoring in Guelph, ON, which provides results in about 65 minutes, and the Hyris bCUBE, which was approved on September 25. On September 28 officials at the World Health Organization (WHO) announced that they would distribute 120 million rapid tests to lower- and middle-income countries. At \$5 apiece, these paper-based tests can determine if someone is infected with the coronavirus in about 15 minutes. In the United States, President Donald Trump announced on Monday that they purchased 150 million rapid tests also capable of producing a result in 15 minutes.

Health Canada approves portable human COVID-19 testing device that delivers results in 90 minutes

Health Canada has granted approval for the Hyris bCUBE to be used as a [medical device for COVID-19 human testing](#). According to a [news release](#), the Hyris bCUBE provides onsite and accurate results in minutes. This timely approval arrives as Canadians face rising COVID-19 cases and it supports the testing capabilities of provincial programs to meet demand. The [Hyris bCUBE](#) is a portable DNA-testing laboratory in a box, offering point-of-care (POC) testing wherever people are—anytime, anywhere. Controlled by any device with an internet connection, including a smartphone, the scientifically validated bCUBE analyzes test samples through a cloud-based platform that delivers accurate results in minutes.

International

Pharmacies bracing for a surge in demand for flu shots amid the COVID-19 pandemic

With flu season fast approaching and the COVID-19 pandemic raging on, hospitals and pharmacies across the United States are stockpiling far more flu vaccines than normal, anticipating a surge in demand, [STAT reports](#). The pharmacy chain Rite Aid has purchased 40% more influenza vaccines than other years to meet an expected uptick in demand. Walgreens has also increased its flu vaccine stockpile this year, anticipating a 30% to 50% jump in customers who will want flu shots or other immunizations. And Robert Redfield, the director of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), told lawmakers in a hearing last week that the agency had ordered an additional 9.3 million adult flu vaccines this year. Redfield says that widespread flu vaccine coverage “could help our nation avert a very difficult fall.”

Some Northern Hemisphere countries struggling to source more flu vaccines: WHO

Some Northern Hemisphere countries are having trouble obtaining additional flu vaccines amid increased demand, but health care workers and the elderly should be prioritized in case of any shortages, the WHO says in a [Reuters report](#). With official warnings of a potential “twindemic” as COVID-19 surges in Europe just ahead of the flu season, the WHO is recommending that people get a seasonal flu vaccine to prevent hospitals from being overwhelmed. But some countries appear not to have enough for everyone, it says.

J&J experimental vaccine shows positive immune reaction; kicks off final study of single shot vaccine

Johnson & Johnson’s (J&J) experimental COVID-19 vaccine led to a positive immune reaction in a small, early-stage clinical trial, the [Wall Street Journal reports](#). The study, which has not yet been peer reviewed, enrolled nearly 800 volunteers and found that

J&J's vaccine appeared safe. The company has already started a Phase 3 study that will recruit up to 60,000 participants for a single-shot COVID-19 vaccine that would potentially simplify distribution of millions of doses compared with leading rivals using 2 doses, [Reuters says](#). The company expects results of the Phase 3 trial by year-end or early next year. Rival vaccines from Moderna, Pfizer and AstraZeneca all require 2 shots separated by several weeks, which make them much more difficult to administer.

Moderna COVID-19 vaccine appears safe, shows signs of working in older adults -study

Results from an early safety study of Moderna Inc.'s coronavirus vaccine candidate in older adults showed that it produced virus-neutralizing antibodies at levels similar to those seen in younger adults, with side effects roughly on par with high-dose flu shots, [Reuters reports](#). The study, published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, offers a more complete picture of the vaccine's safety in older adults, a group at increased risk of severe complications from COVID-19.

AstraZeneca COVID-19 trial on hold in the US

US Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar says that the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine trial in the US remains on hold as federal investigators seek "answers to important questions" over its safety for patients, [CNBC reports](#). "Plan is by the book, we're keeping patient safety at the center of everything we do," he continues. Global clinical trials were placed on hold on September 6 after a participant in the UK reported a serious adverse reaction. Following an investigation, trials resumed in the UK, though the US trial has since remained on hold.

Newsworthy

Canada has a goal to double its coronavirus testing capacity. How are we going to get there?

In anticipation of a second wave of COVID-19, federal and provincial governments are looking to dramatically increase the country's testing capacity in the coming months. They've set a goal to be able to test 200,000 people per day in the event demand becomes that great. Right now, though capacity has grown in recent weeks, the target remains a long way off. Here's a look from [Global News](#) at what's being done to boost capacity, and how Canada could achieve its goal.

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.

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