

CMO SMOH Weekly Notice for AHS Medical Staff

April 16, 2021

This week:

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Highlighted Topics

What's Hot in Vaccines

Phase 2C is Live

All staff and physicians working in a patient care facility or who provide services directly to patients and clients in the community are now eligible to book a COVID-19 immunization appointment. In addition to those who provide patient care, this eligibility includes anyone working within an acute care site, or other patient care facility. All eligible individuals can book their appointment today via the AHS [online booking tool](#), or through a [participating pharmacy](#). For more information about healthcare workers eligible in Phase 2C and how to book an appointment, please see our [FAQ](#).

AHS to provide COVID-19 immunization to eligible, long stay acute care patients

Beginning April 21, AHS and Covenant Health will be providing COVID-19 immunization to some eligible patients in acute care who have, or are anticipated to have, a long hospital stay and wish to be immunized while in hospital. This work recognizes the fact that some individuals may not be able to access community immunization due to their long hospital stay.

See below for further information.

MD Culture Shift (Previously Physician Wellness)

MD Culture Shift Newsletter [Issue 02: April 2021](#).

Upcoming Physician Wellness Zoom Room

Date: Tuesday, April 20, 5-6 p.m.

Topic of focus: Anti-Racism

Related Resource New England Journal of Medicine article: [Racist like me — A Call to Self-Reflection and Action for White Physicians](#)

Zoom Link:

<https://albertahealthservices.zoom.us/j/5253944907?pwd=Z0k1aW9wcWQyNW5HNIAzRVh2VIRLZz09>

Upcoming AHS Our People Strategy event

Date: April 29, 11 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Topic: Let's Talk Mental Health: Please join Our People Strategy sponsor, Sean Chilton, and guests, for a powerful message on the importance of talking about Mental Health.

Register: [Our People Strategy Webinar](#)

Questions/concerns, contact: people.strategy@ahs.ca

NEW Well Doc Alberta Community Bulletin Board

[Community Bulletin Board | welldocalberta](#)

To post physician wellness related events and research, email WellDocAlberta@ucalgary.ca.

Doctor of the Week – Dr. Charles Wong



Dr. Charles Wong has been a strong and innovative leader in Urgent Care Centres (UCC) which play a key role in unscheduled care in Calgary.

Dr. Wong has provided information to physicians in other provinces who were wondering how they should design a UCC in their jurisdiction. He founded a consortium of Urgent Care and ED leaders from across Canada to work together on developing a national strategy to improving care access using the lower cost model of the UCC.

Dr. Wong's other interests include educating medical students and residents at the University of Calgary, as well as conducting clinical research on emergency medical services. He is an up and coming leader on the healthcare scene destined for more great things.

Thank you, Dr. Wong, for your ongoing dedication and support for your colleagues and Albertans.

Providing COVID-19 Immunization to Eligible, Long Stay Acute Care Patients

Beginning April 21, AHS and Covenant Health will be providing COVID-19 immunization to some eligible patients in acute care who have, or are anticipated to have, a long hospital stay and wish to be immunized while in hospital. This work recognizes the fact that some individuals may not be able to access community immunization due to their long hospital stay.

Quick facts:

- This will be implemented across the province as sites acquire the necessary supplies.
- The exact date of when each site will begin offering COVID-19 immunization to eligible long stay acute care patients will vary.
- Please speak with your site lead or acute care lead for more information

Eligibility:

Eligibility will be based on the Government of Alberta's phased immunization approach, the length of the patient's stay in acute care, and the patient's medical condition.

A long acute care stay can be defined as approximately 21 days in hospital or more, although ultimately it will be up to the patient's care team to determine if the patient is well enough to be immunized, and to determine how their immunization in hospital can be coordinated with second-dose requirements in the community, if needed.

The program will not include emergency patients, those attending outpatient clinics, and those admitted for short-stay procedures.

Administration:

- Similar to how the annual influenza immunization is provided to some acute care patients, the COVID-19 immunization will be administered by Acute Care Immunization teams/personnel or AHS Public Health teams, depending on the Zone and site.
- The program will vary from site to site. Please speak with the site or acute care lead for more information.
- Eligible acute care patients will not need to book a COVID-19 immunization appointment with AHS through the online tool or Health Link.
- Those who are eligible will be contacted directly by AHS or Covenant Health to arrange immunization, if they wish.
- Eligible patients are also encouraged to discuss their options with their care provider to arrange immunization.

Vaccine product:

- Patients will be provided with either the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccines, whichever is available at their acute care site.
- Immunizations will be provided in accordance with available vaccine supply and with AHS' [Vaccine Waste Mitigation Strategy](#).

First dose:

- If a patient receives their first dose while in hospital, staff will help ensure the patient knows how to book their second dose appointment in the community after they are discharged.
- AHS Transition Services may also be available to work closely with the patient and their care team to assist in linking them with immunization services available in the community, as needed.

Second dose:

- Second doses of the COVID-19 immunization will be provided up to four months (16 weeks) after the first dose, in alignment with the approach recommended by the [National Advisory Committee on Immunization](#) (NACI).
- If the patient is in hospital for a long stay, or is anticipated to be, and they are within the recommended second dose timeframe, a second dose appointment can be arranged for them.
- If for some reason a second dose cannot be accommodated within the recommended 16 week window (available vaccine supply, medical condition of the patient, etc.), then the second dose will be administered as soon as possible within acute care, if appropriate, or in the community.
- Immunization will occur with the same type of vaccine for both doses unless explicit direction is given otherwise.
- Patients who have already been immunized with a specific vaccine (e.g., Moderna or Astra Zeneca) not available at the site may need to wait to receive their second dose after discharge.

If you have any questions about this process, please reach out to your medical leader. Thank you for your continued support.

University of Calgary: A Mental Health and Vaccination Conversation during COVID-19 Times: A Path out of the Darkness**Facilitators/Experts:**

- Dr Angel Chu, Associate Professor, Infectious Disease Specialist, U of C
- Dr Margie Oakander, Clinical Associate Professor Dept. of Psychiatry U of C

Dr. Oakander will be providing resourcing and conversation around mental health issues being the fifth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, then Dr Chu will provide a latest update on vaccination.

Date: April 28

Time: 7 p.m.

Register: [Webinar Registration - Zoom](#)

University of Calgary: Campus Alberta Provincial Forum on Health Outcomes and Public Health

The annual Campus Alberta Provincial Forum on Health Outcomes and Public Health is on May 17. This year's full-day Zoom conference features:

- Keynote address: Hard Lessons Learned from COVID – the Way Forward for Public Health, provided by Dr. Georges Benjamin, executive director of the American Public Health Association.
- Fireside Chat with Dr. Benjamin
- Campus Alberta project updates

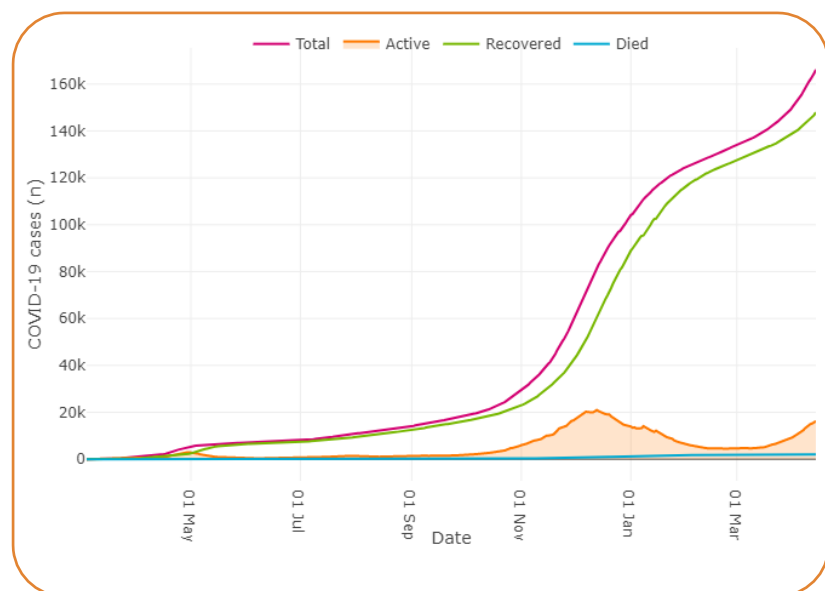
Campus Alberta is made up of provincial stakeholders in public health, including representatives from AHS, the universities of Alberta, Calgary and Lethbridge, Alberta Health and the Alberta Public Health Association. Participating partners seek to align creativity, expertise, educational programs, and research platforms toward the common goal of internationally leading innovation in the domains of health outcomes and public health.

For information and registration, please visit the University of Calgary's O'Brien Institute for Public Health [website](#).

Highlights from the CEO All Staff Update

COVID-19 Case Status in Alberta

This past week, Alberta reported another spike in new and active cases of COVID-19, driven by the rapid spread of variants of concern across the province, including an increase of more than 550 per cent for the P.1 variant that originated in Brazil. There was an average of 1,332 new daily cases of COVID-19 in the province for the seven-day period ending April 14, compared to 1,102 for the previous seven-day period, a 20.9 per cent increase.



New Cases

While all zones reported increases in their new cases this week, the Calgary Zone reported the largest: 4,071 (an average of 582 per day) this week compared to 3,636 (an average of 519 per

day) the previous week, a 12 per cent increase. The largest change in new cases this week occurred in the Central Zone, with 980 new cases compared to 592 the previous week, 65.5 per cent increase. Overall individuals aged 10 to 49 accounted for about 70 per cent of new cases.

Active Cases

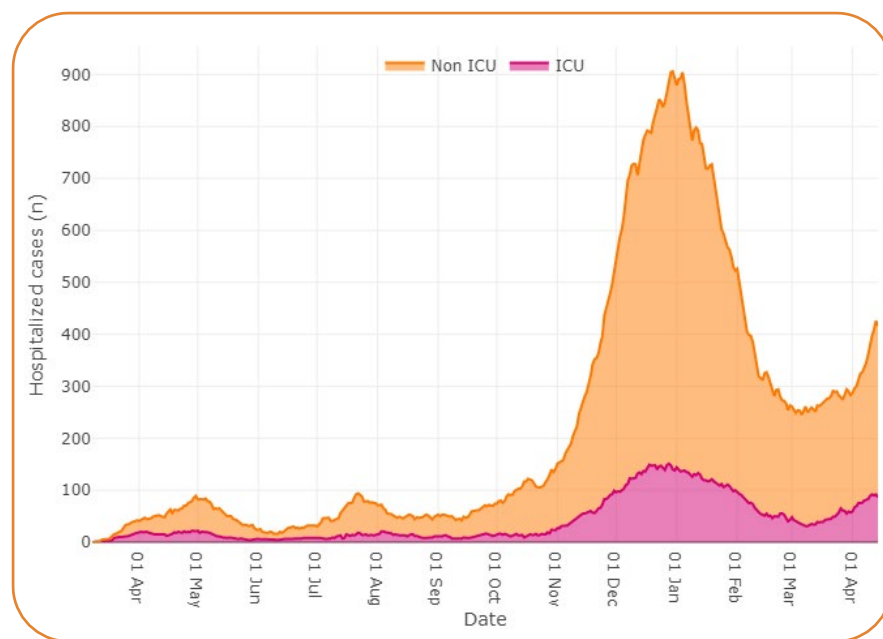
As of April 14, there were 16,223 active cases of COVID-19 in the province, which is a third more cases (4,036) than the previous week. All zones reported increases in active cases, with Central Zone reporting a 61.2 per cent increase, as you can see in the table below.

	Active Cases (as of April 14)	Active Cases (as of April 7)	Per cent Change
Calgary	7,329	5,709	+28.4%
Edmonton	4,201	2,916	+44.1%
North	2,174	1,614	+34.7%
South	930	915	+1.6%
Central	1,515	940	+61.2%
Unknown	74	93	-20.4%

For the 14th week in a row, the Calgary Zone has the most active cases.

Hospitalizations and ICU admissions

As we would expect, the recent spikes in new and active cases are adding to our hospitalization and ICU numbers. On April 14, there were 86 individuals in ICUs with COVID-19 compared to 80 on April 8, a 7.5 per cent increase. A total of 330 individuals were in non-ICU hospital beds with COVID-19 on April 14 compared to 256 on April 8, a 28.9 per cent increase.



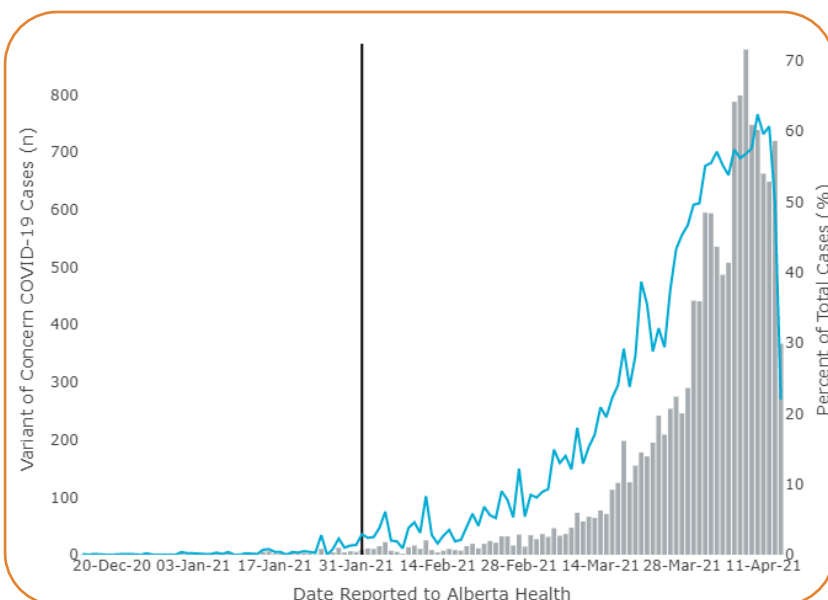
The breakdown of hospitalizations by zone as of April 14 is as follows:

	Hospitalizations	ICUs
Calgary	166	39
Edmonton	147	29
Central	37	5
South	33	7
North	33	6

Variants of concern

Alberta Health has now reported 13,952 cases of COVID-19 variants of concern (VOC), an increase of 68.5 per cent since April 7: 13,770 are the B.1.1.7 variant (originating in the U.K.), 29 are the B.1.351 variant (originating in South Africa) and 153 are the P.1 variant (originating in Brazil). On April 7, there were 23 P.1 cases reported; this week's number represents an increase of 565 per cent. Of the 13,952 VOC cases, 8,682 are active (53.5 per cent of total active cases), 5,222 people have recovered and 48 people have died.

The figure below shows new VOC cases (grey bars) and the percentage of VOC cases identified compared to other cases of COVID-19 (blue line). Between April 6 and April 12, the percentage of VOC cases ranged from 56.2 per cent to 62.4 per cent.



Other notable COVID-19-related information:

As of April 14:

- A total of 166,177 cases of COVID-19 have been detected in Alberta and a total of 7,048 individuals have been hospitalized, which amounts to 4.2 individuals for every 100 cases. In all, 147,920 Albertans have recovered from COVID-19.
- 2,034 individuals have passed away from COVID-19, including 29 deaths from April 8 to April 14). We extend our condolences to the families of these individuals, and to all who have lost loved ones from any cause during this time.
- A total of 3.9 million tests have been conducted and 1.97 million individuals have been tested. From April 8 to April 14, 102,806 COVID-19 tests were completed, an average of 14,584 tests per day. During this period, the daily positivity ranged from 8.02 per cent to 9.93 per cent.
- For the winter school term, AHS has confirmed 4,203 individuals with COVID-19 were present at schools while infectious or acquired the disease in the school setting. A total of 959 out of 2,415 schools (roughly two of five) in the province have reported an individual has attended their school while infectious or had in-school transmission.

The R value, also known as the reproduction number, describes the ability of a disease to spread. It tells us the average number of people that someone with COVID-19 will infect. An R value of 1 means an infected person will infect one other person on average. Values below 1 mean transmission is decreasing; above 1, transmission is increasing. The provincewide R value from April 5 to April 11 was 1.12, compared to 1.17 the previous week.

COVID-19 Testing for Healthcare Workers — the Latest Numbers

We continue to update the testing data for healthcare workers in the AHS Healthcare Worker COVID-19 Testing dashboard. Starting this week, these statistics provide the total number of AHS and Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) employees and physicians tested, including a breakdown of the number of positive tests and those who have been confirmed to have been exposed in the workplace. Covenant Health data will no longer be included moving forward as they will begin to report their testing information within their own organization. This will result in the drop of the total numbers from last week's report.

As of April 14:

- 74,367 employees (AHS and APL combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 4,666 (or 6.27 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 2,430 employees who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, 457 (or 18.8 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 2,103 employees who have tested positive are still under investigation as to the source of infection.
- 5,179 physicians (AHS and APL combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 215 (or 4.15 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 119 physicians who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, 11 (or 9.24 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 96 physicians who have tested positive are still under investigation as to the source of infection.

For more information, see the AHS Healthcare Worker [COVID-19 Testing infographic](#) and [dashboard](#).

COVID-19 Immunization Updates

By the Numbers

As of 10 a.m. today (April 16), more than 1 million total doses of COVID-19 vaccine have been administered by AHS. More than 645,700 Albertans have received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine and more than 209,600 have received both Dose 1 and Dose 2.

Phase 2C healthcare worker immunization continues

All staff working in a patient care facility or who provide services directly to clients in the community are now eligible to book a COVID-19 immunization appointment.

In addition to those who provide patient care, this eligibility includes anyone working within an acute care site, or any other patient care facility. All eligible individuals can book their appointment today via the AHS [online booking tool](#), or through a [participating pharmacy](#). Appointments are available in every zone across the province. We encourage everyone eligible in this cohort to book their immunization appointment as soon as possible.

Healthcare teams from across the province have worked together over the past 14 months to help ensure the safety of our patients, families and one another. Please take care of yourself and consider getting immunized.

For more information about healthcare workers eligible in Phase 2C and how to book an appointment, please see our [FAQ](#).

Other eligibility criteria

As a reminder, any staff or physicians eligible in Phase 1, 2A or 2B of Alberta's vaccine rollout who haven't yet received the vaccine are encouraged to book their appointment through a [participating pharmacy](#) or [AHS](#).

Phase 2B includes individuals with at least one of the identified underlying conditions born in or before 2005. The criteria can be found [online](#) and is recommended by the Alberta Advisory Committee on Immunization and affirmed by the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

A doctor's note or other proof of a condition is not required to be immunized as a part of Phase 2B. You may want to consult your healthcare provider prior to booking their appointment if you need clarification on whether or not your condition is on the list, but this is not required.

All Albertans aged 55-64 can also receive the AstraZeneca/Covishield vaccine.

All eligible individuals can book their appointment today via the AHS [online booking tool](#), by calling 811 or through a participating pharmacy. Walk-in appointments are also available starting April 17 in both [Calgary and Edmonton](#).

Vaccine supply can be unpredictable and we are working diligently to immunize as many people as possible as quickly as possible, with available product. Please do not wait to book your appointment.

AstraZeneca/Covishield available on a walk-in basis in Edmonton and Calgary

For a limited time, walk-in appointments for AstraZeneca/Covishield will be available for eligible Albertans in Edmonton and Calgary beginning tomorrow (April 17). Albertans aged 55-64 are currently eligible to receive AstraZeneca/Covishield.

The AHS walk-in clinics will run for five days to start. The clinics will be extended subject to available supply.

- The Calgary site will be located at the Southport location, 10301 Southport Lane S.W.
- The Edmonton site will be located at the Edmonton Expo Centre, 7515 118 Avenue N.W.

Any Albertan 55 and older, regardless of where they live, can receive the AstraZeneca/Covishield vaccine. Albertans aged 65 and older are also eligible for Pfizer and Moderna vaccines via the [AHS online booking tool](#), by calling 811 or through a [participating pharmacy](#).

Each AHS site has capacity for 500 AstraZeneca/ Covishield drop-ins to start. Capacity will be adjusted based on demand.

We'd like to thank our staff and physicians for helping to make this work possible. The hope is that offering walk-in clinics will help increase the number of Albertans who will be able to be immunized, helping to protect our healthcare system and our communities.

Please visit ahs.ca/covidvaccine for more information, including clinic hours.

Meanwhile, 26 pharmacies are also accepting walk-ins, as well as those taking appointment-based bookings. Visit the [Alberta Blue Cross website](#) for more information.

Any eligible Albertan can also continue to book appointments through the AHS online booking tool or by calling 811 to receive the AstraZeneca/Covishield vaccine.

There have been no confirmed cases of the rare blood clots — known as vaccine-induced prothrombotic immune thrombocytopenia (VIPIT) — in Alberta, and only one case in all of Canada. The risk of VIPIT for Albertans is exceedingly rare. However, the risk of a severe outcome from COVID-19 infection is much higher, especially with increasing age.

A view of Edmonton's Expo Centre immunization site

Earlier this week, AHS activated large-scale, easily accessible COVID-19 immunization sites across the province — including one within Hall C of the Edmonton Expo Centre. Cameras were at Expo Centre before the immunization site opened and [this video](#) gives you an idea of how much

work has gone into creating a site that can be used to immunize a large number of Albertans every day.

Booking your second-dose appointment

AHS continues to offer second doses of the COVID-19 vaccine within four months (16 weeks) after the first dose. This will allow all adult Albertans to receive their first dose of the vaccine by June. This aligns with the approach recommended by the [National Advisory Committee on Immunization](#) (NACI). Emerging evidence shows first doses of the vaccine are at least 80 per cent effective at preventing severe illness and longer spacing between doses does not reduce the protection or duration of immunity for multi-dose products.

This data includes studies in healthcare workers, long-term care residents, elderly populations and the general public. Real-world vaccine effectiveness is typically lower than what you would see in clinical trials, which report 92 per cent protection from symptomatic disease two weeks after a single dose.

Second doses are necessary to ensure you're protected for as long as possible. Anyone who received their first dose prior to March 10 will still receive their second dose within 42 days. All existing appointments for second doses will be honoured.

From March 10 onwards, first and second dose appointments will be booked separately. Individuals will receive a reminder from AHS at a later date, by text message, email or automated call, of when to book their second-dose appointment.

COVID-19 Fact or Fiction: Myth-Busting Tool

AHS has launched a new myth-busting tool on the Together4Health website to dispel myths you may be hearing about COVID-19. Click [here](#) to join the conversation today. Use the "COVID-19 Fact or Fiction" tab to post your comment. AHS experts will be happy to respond.

Stay Vigilant, Follow Safety Measures Even When Vaccinated

As more employees get their COVID-19 vaccine, it's still extremely important to take the necessary precautions to reduce the spread of COVID-19. This includes simple actions — such as completing your daily [fit for work screening](#) and adhering to all [personal protective equipment \(PPE\)](#) measures (including [continuous masking and eye protection](#)), [washing your hands](#) regularly and [physically distancing](#).

We cannot overstate the importance of staying home when sick. If you have new symptoms, or if your usual symptoms get worse, stay home, minimize contact with others and complete the [Self-Assessment Tool](#) to determine if you need COVID-19 testing. We each have a role to play in protecting each other — patients, staff, physicians, volunteers and visitors. We must all be diligent in modelling safe work practices.

Please talk to your medical leader if you have questions or if you are unsure if your symptoms should require you to stay home.

Additionally, as we strive to keep our patients, families, and each other safe through the remainder of our COVID-19 journey, we want to remind all frontline healthcare workers of the importance of ensuring proper PPE is worn during each patient interaction.

Facial (mask and eye) protection is PPE to protect the mucous membranes of our eyes, nose and mouth. Together with masks, [eye protection](#) such as face shields prevent exposure to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. While AHS continues to ensure a stable supply of eye protection including face shields is available at all sites across the province, guidance for cleaning and reuse of eye protection has been provided as a strategy to help reduce the environmental impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

AHS encourages all staff and physicians to ensure that eye protection is cleaned or discarded whenever their mask is changed. In addition, eye protection should be discarded when visibly soiled or damaged.

If staff and physicians choose to clean and reuse eye protection, the following guidance must be followed [Use and Reuse of Eye Protection during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#). To learn more: [Personal Protective Equipment](#)

[PPE Safety Coaches](#) are available to provide peer to peer support to help increase the proper selection and use of PPE, including the proper use of eye protection. PPE Coaches are available on most units during each shift. To contact a PPE Safety Coach, reach out to your unit leadership.

As the pandemic continues, working together to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our facilities through the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) remains critical. Thank you for continuing to ensure the safety our patients, and one another, and for all you do, every day, for Albertans.

Beyond COVID-19

CMO Physician Conversation Series Follow Up

On April 15, we hosted a CMO Physician Conversation Series session on AHS Medical Leadership, and heard from the following leaders within AHS about their personal journeys:

- Dr. Verna Yiu, Chief Executive Officer and President
- Dr. Esther Tailfeathers, Senior Medical Director
- Dr. Kerri Novak, Chair, Zone Medical Administrative Committee

An opportunity to ask questions followed, and we heard a theme develop which will be addressed in the May Conversation Series: Rural Health.

To provide additional information about leadership development, or opportunities to connect, the following resources are available for all AHS Medical Staff on the [AHS Medical Staff webpage](#):

- [Physician Diversity, Wellness and Leadership Development](#)
- [Physician Input Venues](#)
- [Learning and Education](#)
- [News and Events](#)
- [General Resources](#)

For future topic suggestions, or questions, please email cmo@ahs.ca.

Additional Resources for Physicians:

- [Acute Care Outbreak Prevention & Management Task Force](#)
- [AHS Immunization Information](#)
- [AHS Virtual Health](#)
- [COVID-19 FAQ for Clinicians](#)
- [COVID-19 Resources for Community Physicians](#)
- [COVID-19 Testing and Self-Isolation Criteria](#)
- [CPSA's physician portal](#)
- [Cumming School of Medicine Continuing Medical Education \(CME\) Resources](#)
- [Government of Alberta Vaccination Updates](#)
- [How to Access AHS Insite and Email](#)
- [How to do a Nasopharyngeal \(NP\) Swab](#) (New England Journal of Medicine)
- [IPC Emerging Issues](#)
- [Online Healthcare Worker Self-Assessment Tool](#)

- [Physician & Family Support Program](#) - 1-877-SOS-4MDS (767-4637)
- [Physician Wellness Educational Resources: Well Doc Alberta](#)
- [Spectrum](#): A mobile app customized to deliver local antimicrobial stewardship guidelines, resistance data, dosing information, and AHS COVID-19 related content.
- COVID-19 Questions? Contact your local Zone Emergency Operations Centre (ZEOC):
 - ZEOC.South@ahs.ca
 - ZEOC.Calgary@ahs.ca
 - ZEOC.Central@ahs.ca
 - ZEOC.Edmonton@ahs.ca
 - PCH.ZEOCNorth@ahs.ca

For more information

- Visit the [COVID-19 Healthcare Professional information page](#) on the AHS website for more information or contact AHS.ECC@ahs.ca.
- Additional updates and information are being shared through the [College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta \(CPSA\)](#).

This update, provided every Friday, is intended to provide a summary of the key action items, information and decisions for AHS Medical Staff in relation to clinical policies and practices, and for the COVID-19 pandemic response. It is forwarded to physicians' preferred email inbox.

Do you have COVID-19 questions, information, or a physician or team who have gone above and beyond during the pandemic, that you would like to see covered in an upcoming edition of the COVID-19 CMO update? Let us know at CMO@ahs.ca.

Sincerely,

Dr. Francois Belanger

Chief Medical Officer and VP, Quality

Dr. Laura McDougall

Senior Medical Officer of Health



Physical
distancing
works