

CMO SMOH Notice for AHS Medical Staff

October 29, 2021

We would like to recognize that our work takes place on historical and contemporary Indigenous lands, including the territories of Treaties 6, 7 & 8, and the homeland of the Métis. We also acknowledge the many Indigenous communities that have been forged in urban centres across Alberta.

This week:

- Support for Physicians
- MD Culture Shift
- University of Calgary COVID Corner: Mental Health in the Pandemic: Early Detection and Intervention
- Doctor of the Week
- Highlights from the CEO All Staff Update
 - The Right to a Safe Work Environment and Options to Report
 - Submit your COVID-19 Immunization Status
 - COVID-19 Case Status in Alberta
 - COVID-19 Immunization Update
 - At-home Rapid Tests Now Available for K-6 Schools on Outbreak
 - Influenza Immunization Update
 - Verna's Weekly Video Message – Influenza Immunization
- Beyond COVID-19
 - Safe Healthy Environments Team Responds to 100K Service Requests
 - Join a Special Practice Wise Session for Allied Health Week
- Additional Resources for Physicians

Support for Physicians

If you are struggling and feel you need support, there are resources available through the [Physician & Family Support Program \(PFSP\)](#).



MD Culture Shift

Physician Wellness

Moral distress is a psychological response to an experience of moral conflict or moral constraint, which is especially likely to occur during public health emergencies and in other situations when there are extreme resource limitations affecting patient care and the safety of health care workers. (From the CMA document: COVID-19 and Moral Distress).

MD Culture Shift is looking for your help to proactively identify physicians on your teams who may be at an increased risk of experiencing moral distress, with a focus on providing emotional support. Five of the highest-risk groups currently identified include:

- 1) Emergency physicians
- 2) ICU physicians
- 3) STARS physicians,
- 4) Public Health physicians, and
- 5) Physicians working in COVID-19 wards.

However, during this time, all physicians may be at risk of moral distress.

The [Physician & Family Support Program \(PFSP\)](#) continues to offer services on an individual basis by calling the assistance line at 1-877-767-4637.

Two additional options are now available to support physicians struggling with moral distress:

1. An **educational session** of approximately 60 minutes in length, offered through Well Doc Alberta. Requests for an educational session are submitted by the physician leader via email to welldocalberta@ucalgary.ca
2. **Small group support sessions** with a qualified therapist. A group would consist of six to 12 physicians (e.g., from the same team or department) with a qualified therapist. Sessions could be virtual or in-person. Physician leaders interested in this option for their teams should call the PFSP assistance line at 1-877-767-4637 for further discussion.

Before organizing an educational or small group session, we suggest that leaders communicate with their teams to provide direct support and to gauge interest in attending a session. We recognize that many physicians are experiencing fatigue and burnout and may not have the capacity for another time commitment.

Some additional resources:

- [Moral Distress](#) (Insite login required), AHS Change the Conversation resource
- [The Long Shadow of Covid](#), Well Doc Alberta
- [The Repair of Moral Injury](#), Cleveringa Dallaire [Critical Conversation Series](#)
- [Covid-19 and Moral Distress](#), Canadian Medical Association
- [Pandemic Wellness Toolkit](#), Canadian Medical Association
- Trauma Informed Leadership Training (**TILT**) - coming soon: a three-hour course for Physician Leaders

MD Culture Shift Events

- CMA Wellness Connection November Series
 - [Mindful Parenting - Getting Home Life Organized](#): Nov. 9, 12 p.m.
 - [Compassion Rounds - Blue Zones](#): Nov. 11, 7 a.m.
 - [Preventing and Overcoming Burnout - Bringing Back Social Connection](#): Nov. 18, 12 p.m.
- MST: MD Culture Shift Community of Practice (COP) Nov. 24: 7-8:30 p.m.
 - [Zoom link](#)
 - Passcode: 603079

This first session of a new ongoing COP will be focused on an introduction to the portfolio of diversity, wellness and leadership development with an introduction to trauma informed leadership. The additional topics will be determined by you, the leaders (formal and informal), in AHS who have an interest in shifting culture. These topics may include wellness initiatives, anti-racism initiatives, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, sense of belonging, psychological safety, anti-bullying, and metrics of culture.

MD Culture Shift Resources

- Check out our latest **MD Culture Shift newsletter** ([October edition](#))

University of Calgary COVID Corner: Mental Health in the Pandemic: Early Detection and Intervention

COVID Corner, hosted by the University of Calgary, offers updates on various topics and aspects related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This next session, *Mental Health in the Pandemic: Early Detection and Intervention*, will:

- Describe the impact of the pandemic on mental health presentation in children and adolescents
- Recognize the importance of early screening and management of mental health disorders in children and adolescents
- Describe the impact of the pandemic on opioid and alcohol substance use disorders in the Alberta adult population
- Summarize key clinical tools and resources available for supporting mental health of patients and families

Date: Nov. 10

Time: 7-9 p.m. MST

For more information, including registration, visit the [website](#).

Doctor of the Week

Doctor of the Week shows the people, faces and stories of the physicians caring for patients across Alberta Health Services. Physicians for this feature are nominated by their colleagues. Contact cmo@ahs.ca to nominate a physician to be featured here.

Highlights from the CEO All Staff Update

The Right to a Safe Work Environment and Options to Report

AHS does not tolerate any form of [harassment](#) (Insite login required) – no one should be subjected to any form of unwelcome behavior from anyone they work with, or feel threatened in any way. That includes sexual harassment in any form, such as inappropriate advances, or any unwelcome physical or verbal behaviour. Anyone who works for AHS has the right and expectation to a safe work environment – behaviours that are not consistent with our values are taken extremely seriously.

Your first step for any concerns about harassment should be to talk to your leader or next level leader, and then report it in MySafetyNet (MSN). MSN reporting is a [safe and confidential](#) (Insite login required) way for all AHS employees, medical and midwifery staff and students to address concerns about harassment. Individuals who come forward will have support as the complaint process unfolds.

We acknowledge that coming forward with a complaint can be difficult. Any instances of such behaviour will be investigated thoroughly and confidentially, and we will take appropriate action to ensure our people are safe and protected.

See our [Respectful Workplaces and the Prevention of Harassment and Violence policy](#) (Insite login required), which ensures any form of workplace violence or harassment is addressed appropriately, and in accordance with AHS' legal obligations, values and principles of a just culture. Additional resources are available on [Respectful Workplaces](#) and [Workplace Harassment and Violence Prevention](#) on Insite.

Our [Whistleblower Policy](#) (Insite login required) also provides a confidential option for you to report any concerns about wrongdoing. If staff wish to report confidentially, they can email complianceofficer@ahs.ca or call the Safe Disclosure Line at 1-800-661-9675.

Sexual harassment can find its way into any workplace. We'd like to share a past [President's Speakers Series presentation](#) (Insite login required) by Carla Kettner, a writer and producer from Los Angeles, who has decades of experience in the movie and television industry. The four-part series, which we posted in 2018, is called Sexual Harrassment in Hollywood: What Healthcare can Learn? It provides insight and learnings generated by the #metoo movement, which can be applied to our workplaces at AHS. Please take some time to watch these compelling videos, available here: [Part 1](#) | [Part 2](#) | [Part 3](#) | [Part 4](#).

[Submit your COVID-19 Immunization Status](#)

If you haven't submitted your proof of immunization or received your final dose of COVID-19 vaccine, please submit it today. Use the [Got My COVID-19 Immunization Form](#) (Insite login required) to submit your record.

Have an Alberta Health Care Number (AHCN) (nine digits) as a patient and received your immunization in Alberta?

- Use the [Got My COVID-19 Immunization Form](#) (Insite login required) to submit and have your AHCN (nine digits) and your CPSA, ADAC or CPPA registration number ready to enter. Include your employee number too if you're also an AHS or APL employee.

Don't have an AHCN or received your immunization outside Alberta and you haven't reported it to Alberta Health already?

1. Use the [email template](#) (Insite login required) and fill out the fields before you submit
2. Ensure your vaccination records include your name, date of birth, vaccine type and date of final dose given
3. If you submit using your AHS email, it will automatically be sent securely to Workplace Health and Safety

If you have questions regarding your immunization status, email COVID19Immunization@ahs.ca.

Workers have **until Nov. 15** to submit their proof of immunization for COVID-19. We've extended the deadline to ensure as many workers as possible have the opportunity to be immunized and provide full proof of immunization. All employees, medical and midwifery staff, students, volunteers and contracted healthcare providers must be fully immunized by **Nov. 30** to comply with the [Immunization of Workers for COVID-19 Policy](#). We stand by this policy and it's essential to ensure the safety of our people, patients and communities. Healthcare workers have an [ethical and professional](#) (Insite login required) responsibility to protect others. Immunization helps us meet this standard.

Except where a workplace accommodation is approved, those workers who are not fully immunized by Nov. 30 will be placed on an unpaid leave of absence. For more information, see the latest staff and leader FAQ [here](#) (Insite login required).

[COVID-19 Case Status in Alberta](#)

ICU capacity update

AHS continues to do all it can to ensure we have enough ICU capacity to meet patient demand.

With pressure easing slightly on our ICUs, we are reducing the available surge beds so that we can redeploy staff back to caring for non-COVID-19 patients who need surgeries and procedures completed.

We will ensure that we maintain ICU capacity above daily demand to a planned maximum of 380 beds as long as staff and physician availability allows, and will readjust our plans as needed if COVID-19 cases rise again.

We currently have 323 general adult ICU beds open in Alberta, including 150 additional spaces above our baseline of 173 general adult ICU beds.

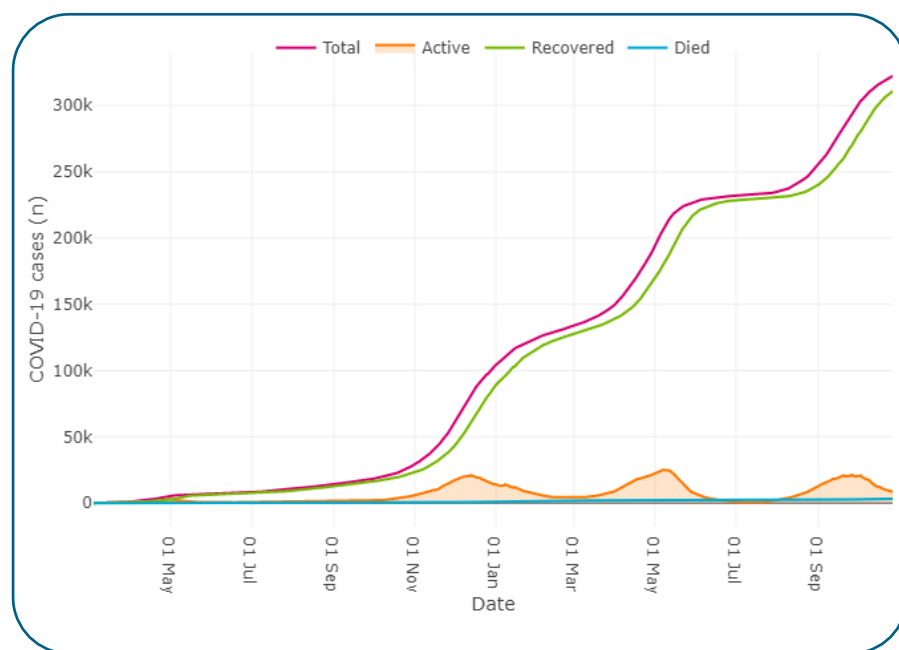
There are currently 257 patients in ICU, about two thirds of whom are COVID-19 positive.

Provincially, ICU capacity (including additional surge beds) is currently at 80 per cent. Without the additional surge spaces, provincial ICU capacity would be at 159 per cent.

New and active cases

As of October 27, there are 8,387 active cases of COVID-19 in Alberta, a 19.6 per cent decrease compared to October 20. All zones reported a decrease in active cases, with South Zone reporting the largest decrease, down 20.6 per cent from October 20. For the fourth week in a row, the Calgary Zone reported the most active cases, with 2,162.

There was an average of 555 new cases of COVID-19 per day this week, compared to 761 cases per day the previous week (October 14 to October 20), a 27.1 per cent decrease. For the third week in a row, all zones reported decreases in the number of new cases per day, ranging from an 18.1 per cent decrease in the South Zone to a 35.4 per cent decrease in the Central Zone. Over the past week, the Calgary Zone reported the highest total number of new cases with 1,041 (an average of 145 cases per day), compared to 1,295 new cases the previous week (an average of 185 cases per day). The full breakdown of the number of active cases by zone on October 27 versus October 20, as reported by Alberta Health, is below.

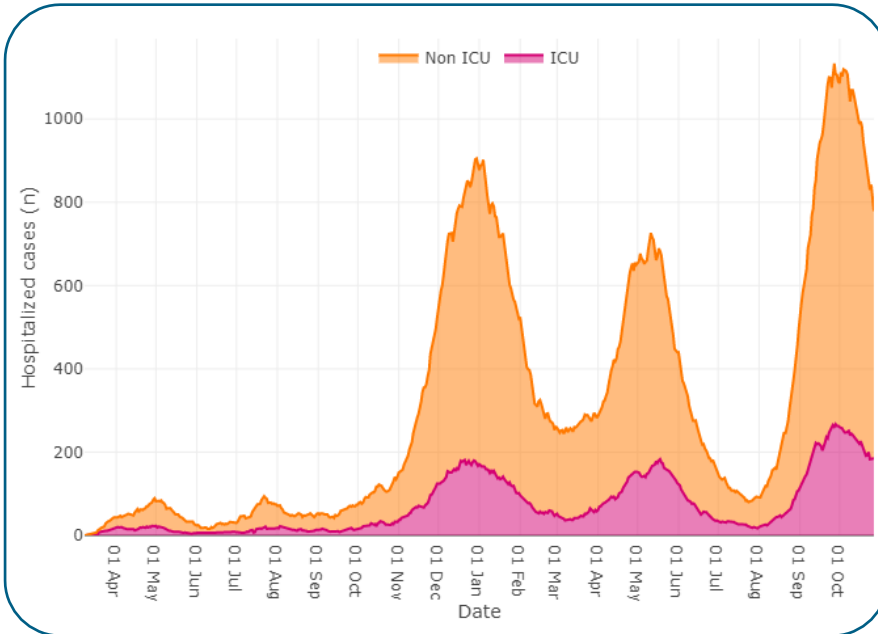


Hospitalizations

A total of 594 individuals were in non-ICU hospital beds for COVID-19 on October 27, compared to 719 individuals in non-ICU hospital beds on October 20, a 17.4 per cent decrease.

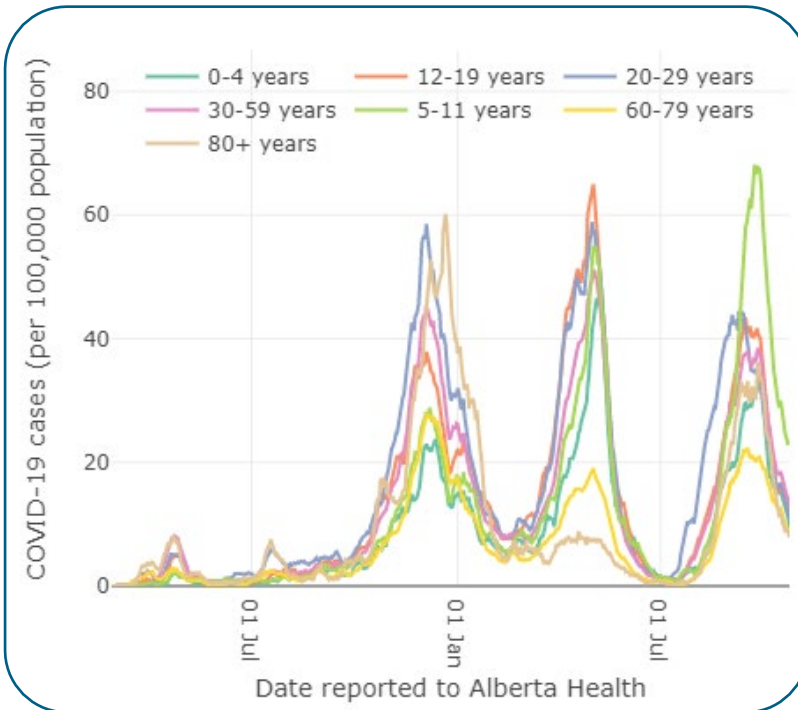
The breakdown of hospitalizations by zone as of October 27 is as follows:

- 249 hospitalizations with 86 of those in ICUs in the Edmonton Zone
- 176 hospitalizations with 49 of those in ICUs in the Calgary Zone
- 161 hospitalizations with 19 of those in ICUs in the Central Zone
- 105 hospitalizations with 10 of those in ICUs in the North Zone
- 88 hospitalizations with 21 of those in ICUs in the South Zone



Cases by age group

As of Oct.24, children ages five to 11 – who are currently ineligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine – had the highest seven-day rolling average of new daily COVID-19 cases, with 23.71 cases per 100,000 children. Albertans ages 30 to 59 had the second-highest rate with 13.29 cases per 100,000 people. All age groups reported a decreased rate of COVID-19 cases compared to the previous report. Trends in cases in Alberta by age group are shown below.



As of Oct. 27, 3,085 individuals have passed away from COVID-19, including 71 deaths over the past week. We extend our condolences to the families of these individuals, and to all who have lost loved ones from any cause during this time.

Variants of concern

For variants of concern, the lab is still using targeted screening of positive samples for strain-typing. From October 19 to October 25, the average percent of positive samples that were strain-typed was 55 per cent. Of those strain-typed the rolling average was 99.7 per cent Delta variant. The remaining 0.3 per cent was a wild variant. Strain-typing takes a number of days and these numbers may change as lab data becomes available.

Other notable COVID-19-related information:

As of October 27:

- A total of 322,386 cases of COVID-19 have been detected in Alberta and a total of 14,262 individuals have ever been hospitalized, which amounts to 4.4 individuals for every 100 cases. In all, 310,914 Albertans have recovered from COVID-19. In this case, recovered means they are no longer considered contagious.
- A total of 5,846,824 tests have been conducted and 2,514,046 individuals have ever been tested. From October 21 to October 27, 66,079 COVID-19 tests were completed, an average of 9,440 tests per day. During this period, the daily positivity ranged from 5.35 per cent to 6.70 per cent.
- Public reporting of schools continues and you can find more information, [here](#).

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 R value is updated every two weeks. From October 11 to October 17, the provincewide R value was 0.85 and the previously reported value was 0.92. The R value was not updated this week.

COVID-19 Immunization Updates

Pfizer vaccine for younger age group still under review by Health Canada

Health Canada continues to review a submission from Pfizer-BioNTech to authorize use of its COVID-19 vaccine in children five to 11 years of age.

This is the first submission Health Canada has received for the use of a COVID-19 vaccine in this younger age group. Health Canada will only authorize the use of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine if the independent scientific review of the submission shows that the vaccine benefits outweigh the potential risks in this age group. The assessment will include review of evolving information about the health impacts of COVID-19 and variants of concern on children in Canada.

This week, a [U.S. Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\) advisory committee](#) voted in favour of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine for children five to 11 years old, and today, the U.S. FDA issued emergency use authorization. This is the first COVID-19 vaccine authorized for children younger than 12 in the United States.

Studies with Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine are ongoing in children less than 5 years of age, and other manufacturers are also testing their vaccines in children of various age ranges. Health Canada expects to receive data for review in the coming months.

Availability of Janssen vaccine in Alberta

Alberta has requested a small shipment of the Janssen vaccine from National Operations Centre and it is expected to arrive in November. More information should be available next week.

The other COVID-19 vaccines – Pfizer and Moderna – continue to be available in Alberta, and are safe and effective. You can book an appointment online at [ahs.ca/vaccine](#), or you can call Health Link at 811, or check with your local pharmacy or doctor's office.

You can sign up to get notified when there are vaccine updates and timeline changes from Alberta Health, here: alberta.ca/vaccine.

Update on additional doses for healthcare workers

No decisions have been made on expanding third doses to healthcare workers.

Alberta Health makes decisions regarding eligibility for vaccines in the province. These decisions are informed by expert advice from the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) and the Alberta Advisory Committee on Immunization. We will continue to keep you updated on Alberta Health decisions in this area. NACI today released its recommendations on third doses, which includes recommendation for some frontline health care workers who received initial doses within a short interval. This new information will be considered by Alberta Health, as noted. Additional detail on the NACI recommendation is available [here](#).

Travel and COVID-19 immunization

The U.S. will be reopening its borders to fully immunized travellers starting Nov. 8, and individuals immunized with [any combination of two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine](#) authorized by U.S. regulators or the World Health Organization – including AstraZeneca - will be considered fully immunized.

Federal vaccine requirements to board a flight, train or ship are also changing this weekend. Starting Oct. 30, if you are 12 years of age or older, you will need to be COVID-19 symptom-free and fully vaccinated in order to board:

- domestic or international flights departing from airports in Canada
- VIA Rail and Rocky Mountaineer trains
- non-essential passenger vessels, such as cruise ships, on voyages of 24 hours or more departing from ports in Canada, once voyages resume

However, from October 30 to November 29, there will be a short transition period when travellers who don't yet qualify as fully vaccinated will be able to travel if they can show a valid COVID-19 molecular test taken within 72 hours of travel. For more information, please visit the [Government of Canada's webpage](#).

Appointments can be booked [online](#) at AHS clinics, participating pharmacies and doctor's office, or by calling Health Link at 811. COVID-19 vaccines are also available by walk-in at [participating clinics](#) and pharmacies. Individuals aged 65 and older who live on a First Nations reserve can access third doses through local public health clinics on-reserve. For more information, go to alberta.ca/vaccine.

At-home Rapid Tests Now Available for K-6 Schools on Outbreak

As announced by the [Government of Alberta](#), starting Oct. 27, at-home rapid test kits are being provided to schools with kindergarten to Grade 6 students across the province that are on outbreak status. Schools on outbreak must [submit a request to Alberta Health](#) to receive tests for this program.

Schools are providing students and staff who wish to participate with 10 tests to take home, and they will be required to test twice weekly for five weeks. A [how-to video for parents](#) and [a fact sheet translated into multiple languages](#) is available, offering tips on how to use the kits.

If a student or staff member has symptoms of COVID-19, they should not use a rapid test. They should stay home and book a test online using the [AHS online self-assessment tool](#) or by calling Health Link at 811. If a student or staff member has a positive rapid test result, they must isolate for 10 days or until they have a negative test through AHS.

Influenza Immunization Update

As of October 23, three cases of influenza have been confirmed and 289,990 doses of influenza vaccine have been administered across the province.

Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) has tested 14,361 respiratory swabs for influenza, from August 29, 2021 to the end of day October 23, 2021. This does not include a small number of tests completed at regional hospitals.

Although the influenza activity we are seeing right now in the province is less than we would see in a typical season, we expect to see influenza and other respiratory viruses circulate in our communities this year.

Last influenza season showed us just how important and effective immunization combined with practicing good hygiene, physical distancing, masking and staying home when sick, are in preventing the spread of influenza and other respiratory illnesses.

We all must do our part to protect one another. If you haven't received your COVID-19 vaccine, get immunized at the same time as your flu shot. It's safe to get both vaccines at the same time.

Influenza immunization information for staff, physicians & volunteers

Staff, physicians and volunteers can also choose to be immunized through a site champion at their facility, a roving cart at their site or a Workplace Health and Safety drop-in clinic.

Immunization appointments are available at the Fort Saskatchewan Community Hospital or the Strathcona Community Hospital in Edmonton; and the Peter Lougheed Centre in Calgary. Book your appointment using the [AHS Influenza Immunization booking tool](#) or call Health Link at 811. See [Insite](#) for more on the staff immunization campaign.

Verna's Weekly Video Message – Influenza Immunization

As we've just read, flu season is upon us – and once again it comes in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is critical that we all continue to take the required precautions to reduce the spread of COVID-19, and other viruses as we enter into the respiratory disease season.

By keeping the number of influenza cases and outbreaks low, we can help protect our patients, as well as our more vulnerable populations, such as seniors and young children. Keeping flu numbers down will also help our healthcare teams maintain capacity in the system and allow us to focus on our COVID-19 response.

As we've seen with COVID-19, immunization is the most effective way to prevent the spread of infection. Immunization for the flu will also reduce symptoms if you do get sick, and limit the spread to those around you. We encourage you all to take action and get the flu shot as soon as you can.

Joining Verna to [tell us more](#) about this year's [influenza campaign](#) are:

- Dr. Kristin Klein, Medical Officer of Health for Provincial Population and Public Health
- Yvonne Haniak, Occupational Health Advisor with Workplace Health and Safety's Standards and Innovation team
- Danielle Neave, Director of Workplace Health and Safety Business Partnerships for the North Zone

Please remember, if you get your flu shot at a public health clinic, pharmacy or doctors' office, don't forget to report your immunization by completing the [Got My Flu Shot Form](#) on Insite.

Beyond COVID-19

Safe Healthy Environments Team Responds to 100K Service Requests

As of Oct. 26, The AHS Safe Healthy Environments (SHE) team has responded to more than 100,000 COVID-19 related complaints and service requests since the beginning of the pandemic.

This is a significant milestone – 100,000 requests over the course of 19 months is an unprecedented volume for the SHE team.

SHE staff are often the first point of contact for many Albertans. They respond to requests related to compliance with current public health measures, masking, capacity and gathering limits, and concerns about people that are not following isolation or other requirements.

Despite the changing needs of the pandemic, the team has stepped up again and again to respond when Albertans have needed them most.

This achievement represents contributions from across SHE - including administrative staff who log the requests, public health inspectors who investigate and resolve/refer complaints, provincial strategy staff who handle system logistics and reporting, and management and leadership staff who guide and support the overall effort.

Thank you to all SHE staff for your dedication, compassion and professionalism during these difficult times. Thank you for keeping our communities healthy and safe.

Join a Special Practice Wise Session for Allied Health Week

Join us in celebrating Allied Health Week with a special Practice Wise session on Nov. 4 from 12 to 1 p.m.

In the session, [Jeremie Saunders](#), co-host of CBC's Sickboy podcast and TEDx speaker, will share what he has learned through conversations with hundreds of podcast guests about their health issues and their most uncomfortable realities. He will also share how, by allowing himself to feel uncomfortable, he has become a more compassionate, empathetic person and a stronger leader.

Nov. 4 from 12 to 1 p.m. | Join by [Zoom](#)

Can't make the session? A recording will be available after. See the Practice Wise [archives](#) (Insite login required).

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.
- Additional updates and information are being shared through the [College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta \(CPSA\)](#).

This update 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.

Dr. Francois Belanger

Chief Medical Officer and Vice President, Quality

Dr. Laura McDougall

Senior Medical Officer of Health

