

CMO SMOH Notice for AHS Medical Staff

February 25, 2022

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 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.

Request for feedback:

- *Are these updates helpful?*
- *Do you have questions or information that isn't covered here that you would like to see, or know more about?*
- *Do you know a physician or team who have gone above and beyond during the pandemic, that you would like to see covered in an upcoming edition?*

Let us know at CMO@ahs.ca.

Thank you to those who have already submitted feedback. Your suggestions will be incorporated into new updates and communication planning in the future.

This week:

- Support for Physicians: MD Culture Shift
- Gratitude from Albertans
- University of Calgary COVID Corner: After Two Years on the COVID Roller Coaster
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- Additional Resources for Physicians

[Support for Physicians: MD Culture Shift](#)

Physician Wellness



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

The **PFSP** is also offering **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.

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

Upcoming events:

We have some spots to fill for an upcoming **PLI course: Talent Management for Exceptional Leadership** – March 30 – 31 and April 1, 2022, 8:00 am to 12:15 pm MT each of the three days, sponsored by Provincial Medical Affairs. Spots will be filled on a 'first email' basis: jodi.ploquin@ahs.ca

MD Culture Shift Community of Practice

We are pleased to resume the MD Culture Shift Community of Practice and bring together Alberta physicians interested in advancing wellness and diversity. Our monthly sessions invite physicians to join a community to share ideas and experiences, celebrate successes, and foster learnings through collective knowledge and wisdom.

Dates: Wednesdays March 30, April 27, May 25 from 0800-0900h Registration Link: [Register for MD Culture Shift COP - Mar 30](#)

Join us on March 30 to review an article and engage in dialogue about physician wellness – where are we now and where are we going. Shanafelt, TD. Physician Well-being 2.0: Where Are We and Where Are We Going? 2021. Mayo Clinic Proceedings. 96(10):2682-2693.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mayocp.2021.06.005>

Trauma Informed Leadership Workshops

A compassionate and trauma-informed approach to leadership is essential for creating healthy workplace cultures. Interested in learning more about Trauma Informed Leadership? The AHS Portfolio of Physician Wellness, Diversity and Development is offering a 15 minute introduction to the topic, and 3 hour workshops delivered by trainers certified through the Crisis and Trauma Resource Institute (CTRI).

- Tues. March 22, 8:00 – 11:00am (virtual)
- Wed. March 30, 5:30 – 8:30pm (virtual)

To book a 15 minute presentation or register for an upcoming workshop, email jodi.ploquin@ahs.ca.

MD Culture Shift Newsletter: Check out the February edition of the [MD Culture Shift Newsletter](#).

Gratitude from Albertans

Everything you and your colleagues do every day to provide safe quality care to all Albertans is being noticed. Messages of gratitude keep coming in from across the province and beyond, during the COVID-19 pandemic. If you need some encouragement, please take a moment to read the messages of gratitude on our [Sharing the Love webpage](#).

University of Calgary COVID Corner: After Two Years on the COVID Roller Coaster

COVID Corner, hosted by the University of Calgary, offers updates on various topics and aspects related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The next session reflects on the past two years of the pandemic.

Date: March 23
Time: 7-9 p.m. MST

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

March 11 is Canadian Women Physicians' Day

March 11, 2022, marks the second ever Canadian Women Physicians Day.

Canadian Women in Medicine will be hosting a virtual event discussing the challenges of the last two years and opportunities for meaningful change with guest speakers, Drs Aimée Bouka, Daisy Fung, Courtney Howard and Lisa Richardson. This event is open to physicians of all genders. A valid college ID is needed.

Date: March 11
Time: 6 p.m. MST
Register: [Here](#)

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. Please provide the nominee's full name and email address.



This week's Doctor of the Week is Sean Dukelow, a physician who was nominated by his colleagues for his kindness, teamwork and dedication to his patients and students.

Dr. Dukelow is a specialist in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PMR) and the Section Chief for PMR in Calgary. He is also the Medical Director for Stroke Rehabilitation for the Calgary Stroke Program and practices as a clinician scientist.

“My clinical practice is almost entirely dealing with patients who have had a stroke. Our efforts are focused on helping them with their rehabilitation needs. I also operate a laboratory where we use novel technology such as robots, non-invasive neurostimulation, and neuroimaging to try to better understand stroke recovery so we can improve the lives of stroke survivors.”

In addition to his clinical work, Dr. Dukelow frequently collaborates with a group of Calgary-based scientists and engineers as part of [RESTORE](#), a network that works with individuals who require neurorehabilitation.

“I like helping people recover from their stroke or neurologic injury and developing new and better methods to encourage recovery. It

is incredibly motivating to train the next generation of physicians and scientists and help give back.”

The ability to support and make a positive impact as an educator is one of the aspects of Dr. Dukelow's work that he is most proud of.

“It is amazing seeing people I have trained go on to become excellent physicians, scientists and clinician scientists. I am so proud of all the medical students, residents, graduate students and fellows who I have been able to help through their training, and who often help me see things in a new light.”

In his spare time, you can find Dr. Dukelow participating in fitness challenges not for the lighthearted, with three Ironman triathalons scheduled within the next 12 months. His wife and two kids, ages eight and 11, help keep him outdoors and busy, skiing, hiking and occasionally building large-scale radio control trucks together.

From us and your teams, thank you, Dr. Dukelow, for being an inspiration to your colleagues, students and patients.

Highlights from the CEO All Staff Update

Note: Recognizing some medical staff use an alternate email address instead of an AHS email address, this section is included to ensure all AHS medical staff have all up-to-date organizational information that pertains to the pandemic and AHS medical staff practices.

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

ICU Update

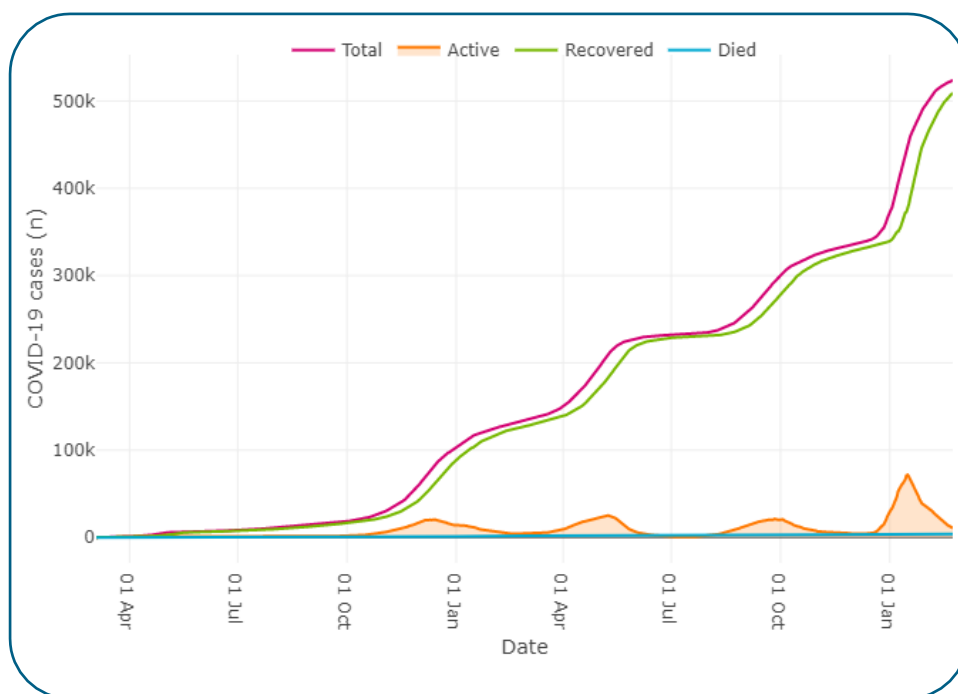
We currently have 235 general adult ICU beds open in Alberta, including 62 additional spaces above our baseline of 173 general adult ICU beds. There are currently 187 patients in ICU. Provincially, ICU capacity (including additional surge beds) is currently at 80 per cent. Without the additional surge spaces, provincial ICU capacity would be at 108 per cent; last week, we were at 112 per cent.

New and Active Cases

As of Feb. 23, there are 10,626 active cases in Alberta, a 35.8 per cent decrease compared to Feb. 16. All five zones reported a decrease in active cases compared to the last report, as you can see in the table below.

	Active Cases (as of Feb. 23)	Active Cases (as of Feb. 16)	Per cent Change
Calgary	3,591	6,094	-41.1%
Edmonton	3,014	4,809	-37.3%
North	1,480	1,948	-24.0%
Central	1,413	2,045	-30.9%
South	1,064	1,542	-31.0%
Unknown	64	113	-43.4%
Overall	10,626	16,551	-35.8%

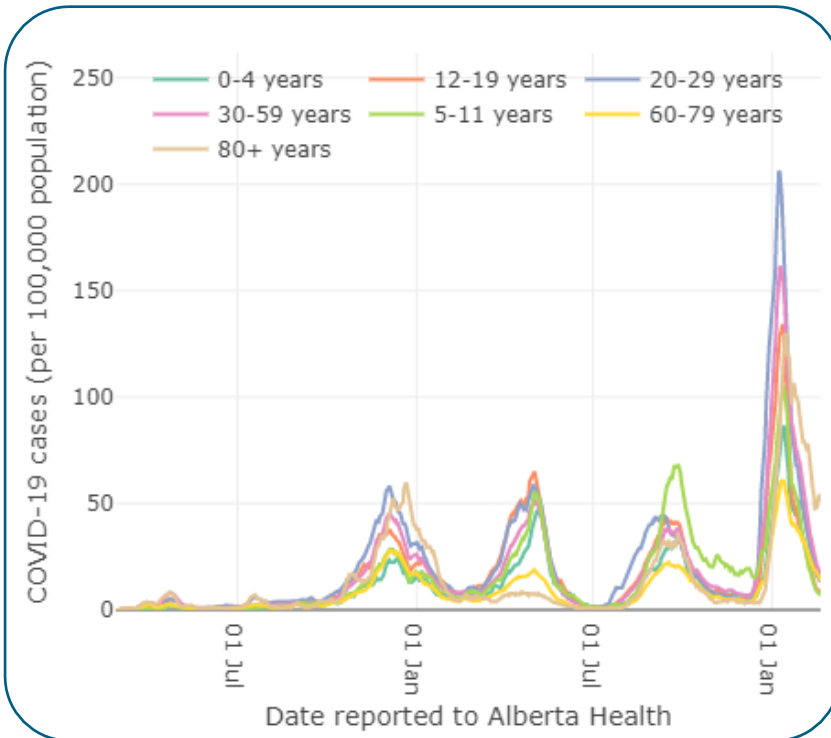
For the seven-day period ending on Feb. 23, there was an average of 647 new cases of COVID-19 per day, compared to 993 cases per day the previous reporting period (Feb. 10-16), a 34.8 per cent decrease. The Calgary Zone reported the highest number of new cases with 1,460, an average of 209 new cases per day.



Please note: We know these data underestimate the number of people with COVID-19 across the province, and changes in testing eligibility make it difficult to compare cases week over week.

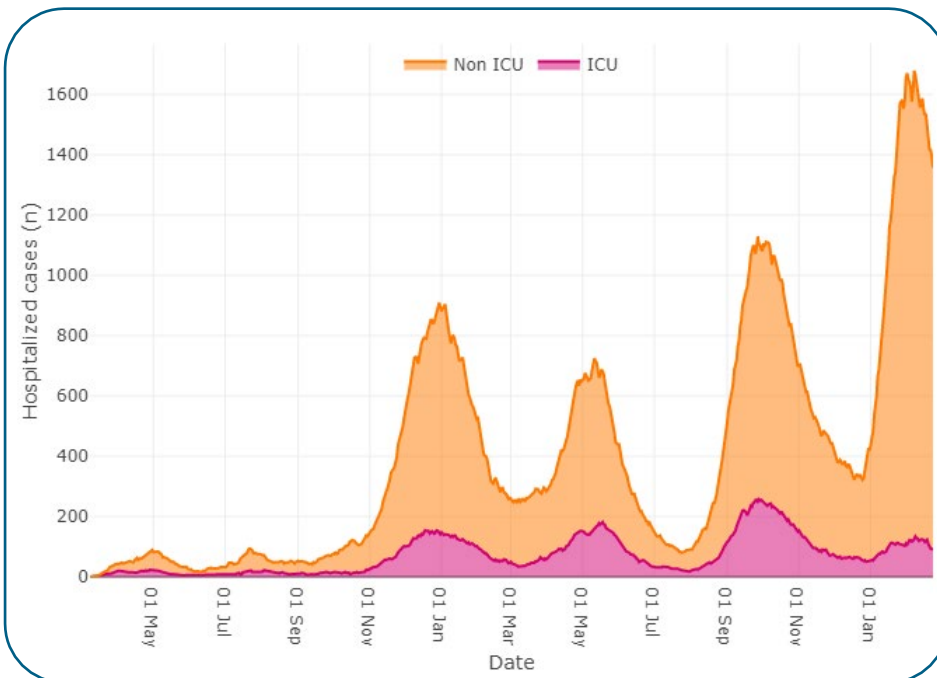
Cases by Age Group

As of Feb. 20, Albertans aged 80+ have the highest seven-day rolling average rate of new daily COVID-19 cases, with 51.1 cases per 100,000 people. Albertans aged 30-59 had the second-highest rate with 15.9 cases per 100,000 people, followed by those aged 60-79 with 13.6 cases per 100,000 people. Targeted testing will be affecting age groups differently. Trends in cases in Alberta by age group are in the figure below:



Hospitalizations

On Feb. 23, 1,265 individuals were in non-ICU hospital beds for COVID-19, compared to 1,416 on Feb. 16, a 10.7 per cent decrease.



Variants of Concern

From Feb. 15 to Feb. 21, an average of 73 per cent of positive samples were strain-typed. Of those, the rolling average was 93.8 per cent Omicron variant, 0.1 per cent Delta variant, and 6.1 per cent wild

type or presumptive variant. Strain-typing takes a number of days and these numbers may change as lab data becomes available.

Vaccine Efficacy Update

This week, we wanted to provide updated numbers showing how well COVID-19 vaccines are continuing to protect against hospitalizations and other serious outcomes in Alberta.

Consider the following regarding people aged five years and older in Alberta over the past 120 days. Those who were unvaccinated were about 3.2 times more likely to be admitted to hospital with COVID-19, seven times more likely to be admitted to ICU, and 4.3 times more likely to die of COVID-19 compared to people in the same age group who had two doses of vaccine.

Boosters are important for increasing vaccine effectiveness and protecting against waning immunity over time. This shows up clearly in the ICU admission data where unvaccinated people were 15.7 times more likely to be admitted to ICU compared to people with three doses of vaccine.

Other notable COVID-19-related information:

- Data from the last seven days indicate 40.1 per cent of new admissions to non-ICU spaces are due to COVID-19 infection directly, 29.3 per cent had COVID-19 as a contributing cause and 30.6 per cent are cases where the infection was not determined to be a cause of admission, or where it was not possible to determine. For ICU, the percentage of new admissions due to COVID-19 directly was 55.8 per cent; 30.2 per cent had COVID-19 as a contributing cause and 14 per cent were incidental infections or unclear.
- As of Feb. 23, 3,885 individuals have passed away from COVID-19, including 63 deaths since the last report. We extend our condolences to the families of these individuals, and to all who have lost loved ones from any cause during this time.
- As of Feb. 23, 523,786 cases of COVID-19 have been detected in Alberta and 20,924 individuals have been hospitalized, which amounts to 4.0 individuals for every 100 cases. In all, 509,275 Albertans have recovered from COVID-19, meaning they are no longer considered contagious. The number of Albertans who have recovered from COVID-19 does not reflect the recovery time from a COVID-19 infection that could last beyond the time in which people are contagious.
- From Feb. 17 to Feb. 23, 19,944 COVID-19 tests were completed, a seven-day average of 2,849 tests per day. During this period, the daily positivity ranged from 18.8 per cent to 26.8 per cent. As of Feb. 23, 6.84 million tests have been conducted and 2.72 million individuals have been tested. COVID-19 testing eligibility has changed recently to accommodate the demand due to the increase in cases.

COVID-19 Updates and New Information You Need to Know

Government announces funding for healthcare expansion

This week, the Government of Alberta made several funding announcements that support the province's healthcare infrastructure.

Earlier today (Feb. 25), government announced that a \$63.5 million will be spent to complete 11 new operating rooms and 17 additional recovery beds at Foothills Medical Centre (FMC) in Calgary. The announcement is part of a \$133-million investment over three years to upgrade and expand hospital operating rooms and departments across the province under the Alberta Surgical Initiative. Currently, surgical teams at FMC perform more than 21,500 surgeries annually in the hospital's 32 operating rooms. Once construction is complete, the 11 additional operating rooms will accommodate approximately 7,000 more procedures at the hospital each year.

Upgrades at FMC will allow surgeons to focus on more complex surgeries and those with long wait lists. Most cancer surgeries in Calgary are performed at FMC, as it's home to the current and new Calgary Cancer Centre. Low-risk surgeries will be moved out of FMC and offered in Canmore, High

River and chartered surgical facilities in Calgary. Design work on the FMC operating room expansion is underway with completion expected in late 2025.

Also this week, the government announced the Red Deer Regional Hospital Centre will undergo a \$1.8-billion expansion, the largest in Alberta history. It will begin with a \$193-million investment over the next three years that will add 200 new inpatient beds, increasing hospital capacity from 370 beds to 570 beds, or by 54 per cent. The expansion also provides for three new operating rooms, which will bring the site's total OR count to 14, including two dedicated obstetrical ORs. A new cardiac catheterization lab will also be part of the hospital's expansion.

Completion of the expansion is slated for 2030-2031.

The Red Deer hospital is the busiest outside of Edmonton and Calgary. It has the fourth-highest patient volume of any AHS facility.

Also announced:

- \$46 million over three years towards a \$79-million total project cost to integrate ambulatory care, primary care, maternal health care and diagnostic services at the La Crete Maternity and Community Health Centre.
- \$99 million to add 30 treatment spaces in the emergency department of the Peter Lougheed Centre and 12 beds in a mental health intensive care unit.
- \$133 million over three years for the Alberta Surgical Initiative Capital Program, to increase surgical capacity at AHS-owned facilities to help ensure all patients receive their required surgeries within clinically recommended timelines.
- \$50 million over three years to begin construction of the neurosciences intensive care unit at the University of Alberta Hospital Brain Centre, increasing neuro ICU capacity from 11 to 24 spaces and adding 18 new inpatient beds at the U of A hospital. This is a foundation-partnered project and we are grateful for the new ongoing support of the University Hospital Foundation.
- \$36 million for the Recovery Communities Stream 2 project to create a new facility with 75 spaces on the Blood Tribe Reserve.
- \$204 million over three years to modernize continuing care facilities and create new spaces.

Step 2 in easing pandemic health measures to possibly start March 1

With hospitalizations continuing to trend downwards, the Alberta government could announce the province is entering Step 2 of its gradual reduction of pandemic health measures, starting on March 1. Premier Jason Kenney is expected to provide additional details tomorrow (Feb. 26).

When step 2 comes into effect, the following measures are expected to be updated:

- Remaining school requirements removed; for example, kindergarten to Grade 6 cohorting.
- Youth screening activities for entertainment and sport activities removed.
- Capacity on all large venues and entertainment venues lifted.
- Indoor and outdoor social gathering limits lifted.
- Indoor masking no longer required.

An implementation date for Step 3 is to be determined and will be dependent on a continuing decline in hospitalization rates.

More information, including details of Step 2 and 3, is available on the [government's website](#).

Walk-in pediatric vaccine clinics available March 2 to 16

From March 2 to 16, several AHS vaccination clinics across the province will be open weekdays from 3 p.m. to 8 p.m. and on weekends from noon to 6 p.m. to accommodate pediatric walk-ins and appointments. To find an AHS clinic with extended hours and walk-in appointments, visit: www.albertahealthservices.ca.

Pharmacies with extended hours and experience vaccinating children will also administer pediatric vaccine to children. Pharmacies in the Edmonton, Calgary, Red Deer, Lethbridge, Grande Prairie, Medicine Hat and Fort McMurray areas will be added, focusing on local geographic regions with under-vaccinated populations of five to 11 year olds, as well as 17 pharmacies in rural communities. To find a pharmacy offering COVID-19 vaccinations for children, visit ab.bluecross.ca.

Several physician clinics that are currently offering COVID-19 vaccinations will receive doses of pediatric vaccine to administer for children ages 5 to 11 from March 2 to 16. These physicians will contact their current patient rosters directly.

Parents and guardians can still book appointments for children age 5 and older online, by using the Alberta vaccine [booking system](#) or by calling 811.

COVID-19 Testing for Healthcare Workers — the Latest Numbers

We continue to update the testing data for healthcare workers. These statistics provide the total numbers 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. The testing data does not include rapid antigen test results for healthcare workers.

As of Feb. 22:

- 93,228 employees (AHS and APL combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 22,482 (or 24.12 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 8,742 employees who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, 727 (or 8.32 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 14,076 employees who have tested positive are still under investigation as to the source of infection.
- 6,479 physicians (AHS and APL combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 1023 (or 15.79 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 358 physicians who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, 27 (or 7.54 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 677 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](#).

Verna's Weekly Video Message: the Impact of Redeployment

Throughout the pandemic, AHS has taken proactive steps to be prepared for expected increases in COVID-19 cases. And in each wave, we have been able to increase our hospital and ICU capacity as required to meet those demands.

Of course, this is only possible through the hard work of countless people across AHS. Many of our people have been redeployed or reassigned throughout the pandemic response, and we're so grateful for their willingness to adapt and their dedication to Albertans.

Joining Verna to talk about [what the redeployment experience is like](#) are:

- Justine Bremner, RN, Mazankowski Alberta Heart Institute
- Nancy Coyne, Clinical Nurse Educator, Sturgeon Community Hospital
- Murray Crawford, Senior Operating Officer in Fort McMurray and area, and ECC Deputy Director

Influenza Immunization Update

As of Feb. 19, 1.19 million doses of influenza vaccine have been administered, which is approximately 27 per cent of the population. A total of 43 influenza cases have been confirmed this season.

Interactive aggregate data is available online at [Alberta influenza statistics](#). For more information on influenza, visit [ahs.ca/influenza](#).

Physicians, staff and volunteers can choose to be immunized at a pharmacy, doctor's office or public health clinic (for children under five years of age and their family and household members). Physicians and staff using these options are reminded to submit their [Got My Flu Shot form](#). See [Insite](#) for more on the immunization campaign.

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](#)
- [MD News Digest](#)
- [Online Healthcare Worker Self-Assessment Tool](#)
- [Physician & Family Support Program](#) - 1-877-SOS-4MDS (767-4637)
- [Physician Wellness Educational Resources: Well Doc Alberta](#)
- [Sotrovimab Easy Reference Guide](#)
- [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 \(CPSA\)](#).

Dr. Francois Belanger

Chief Medical Officer and Vice President, Quality

Dr. Laura McDougall

Senior Medical Officer of Health

