

CMO SMOH Notice for AHS Medical Staff

March 18, 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 week:

- AHS Establishes Ukraine Response
- Supports for Medical Staff
- Verna's Weekly Video Message: Managing Burnout
- Using Labs Wisely in General Medicine during Global Blood Tube Shortage
- Reminder: University of Calgary COVID Corner: After Two Years on the COVID Roller Coaster
- Doctor of the Week
- Highlights from the CEO All Staff Update
 - *COVID-19 Case Status in Alberta*
 - *COVID-19 Updates and New Information You Need to Know*
 - *COVID-19 Immunization Update*
- Beyond COVID-19
 - *Influenza Immunization Update*
 - *MD Culture Shift*
 - *Survey Research on Double Duty Caregivers*
- Additional Resources for Physicians

AHS Establishes Ukraine Response

The ongoing situation in Ukraine continues to change daily and is being monitored by all levels of government. As part of the larger Government of Alberta and Alberta Health planning, AHS is an integral part of the Ukraine response in the province. This planning and response will be done within and as part of the Emergency Coordination Centre.

AHS is working proactively to ensure the organization is prepared to manage and support current and future evacuees or anyone affected by the situation in Ukraine. In addition to ensuring we have supports in place for affected Ukrainians, AHS is also aware that physicians and staff may be feeling the emotional impact of this tragic situation and have [resources and supports](#) in place to help you manage stress and anxiety during this difficult time.

Supports for Medical Staff

We know many of our people are of Ukrainian and Russian heritage, or have family and other loved ones in the country. If you need support to manage stress and anxiety arising from the war in Ukraine or other news events, we have a few specific resources.

Physicians can find support through the Alberta Medical Association's [Physician and Family Support Program](#) (PFSP) by the Alberta Medical Association. The support line at 1-877-SOS-4MDS (767-4637) is available 24/7.



The **PFSP** also offers **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). 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.

The [Help in Tough Times page](#) also offers quick access to important phone numbers, self-help resources and supports on handling stressful situations.

In addition, we have [Change the Conversation resources](#) to help as we process these events: [Being an Ally](#), [Trauma Awareness](#) and [Supporting One Another](#).

If you have questions or concerns, please email Ukraine.Inquiries@ahs.ca.

Additional resources for physicians:

- [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

[Verna's Weekly Video Message: Managing Burnout](#)

The pandemic has affected us all differently, whether we are working on the frontlines or behind the scenes. We know many of us are feeling the impact of cumulative stresses over the past two years, as well as compassion fatigue. Understandably, this can lead to burnout.

We want to do all we can to ensuring the well-being and psychological safety of everyone at AHS. To support this work, our Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) recently conducted a rapid review of ways we can mitigate healthcare worker burnout.

Joining vlog guest host Dr. Francois Belanger, Vice President and Chief Medical Officer, to [talk about the findings of the report and how we can support our people](#) are:

- Dr. Lynora Saxinger, Physician and Medical Lead, AHS Antimicrobial Stewardship, North, and co-chair of the Scientific Advisory Group.
- Mona Sikal, Executive Director, Employee Relations
- Dr. Sharron Spicer, Interim Associate Chief Medical Officer, Physician Health, Diversity & Wellness
- Mona Sikal, Executive Director, Employee Relations.

[Using Labs Wisely in General Medicine during Global Blood Tube Shortage](#)

Learn more about the global blood tube shortage, and what general medicine can do to preserve usage while balancing patient needs through the General Medicine Quality Improvement Network (GeMQIN) and Choosing Wisely Canada Community of Practice webinar.

Date: March 22

Time: 10 a.m.

Register: [here](#).

Reminder: 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](#).

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 Colleen Curtis.

Dr. Curtis is a pediatric neurologist at Alberta Children's Hospital and the residency program director for pediatric neurology. She does a mixture of acute and inpatient care as well as outpatient clinics, following children with neurological problems including seizures, headaches, developmental delay, neurogenetic and neurometabolic diseases.

"My program director role is a terrific opportunity to share my passion for neurology and empower learners to grow in their professional identities. This is a different type of challenging work that I see as equally important to contribute to the ongoing development of our specialty."

Dr. Curtis recently completed a Master's of Science (MSc) in medical education studying the implementation of competency-based medical education and resident assessment strategies.

This has given her a foundation to co-lead the general pediatrics residency program's new Residents as Teachers curriculum. She has also initiated a program evaluation to ensure ongoing fidelity of implementation for the Competence by Design curriculum in the University of Calgary's adult and pediatric neurology programs.

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

As of 1 p.m. today (March 18), AHS has 229 general adult ICU beds open in Alberta, including 56 additional spaces above our baseline of 173 general adult ICU beds. There are 161 patients in ICU. Provincially, ICU capacity (including additional surge beds) is currently at 70 per cent, down from 83 per cent a week ago. Without the additional surge spaces, provincial ICU capacity would be at 93 per cent, down from 110 per cent a week ago.

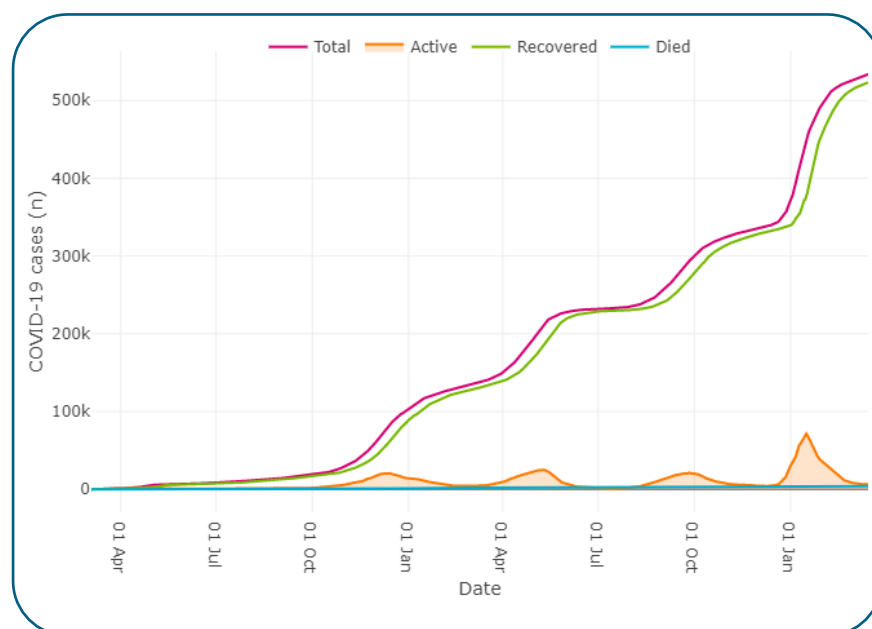
New and Active Cases

Note: Available data is only based on statistics gathered from testing.

As of March 16, there are 6,552 active cases in Alberta, a 2.0 per cent decrease compared to March 9. Four of the five AHS zones reported a decrease in active cases compared to last week, as you can see in the table below.

	Active Cases (as of March 16)	Active Cases (as of March 9)	Per cent Change
Calgary	2,303	2,144	+7.4%
Edmonton	1,971	1,992	-1.1%
North	700	854	-18.0%
Central	918	989	-7.2%
South	650	700	-7.1%
Unknown	10	10	0%
Overall	6,552	6,689	-2.0%

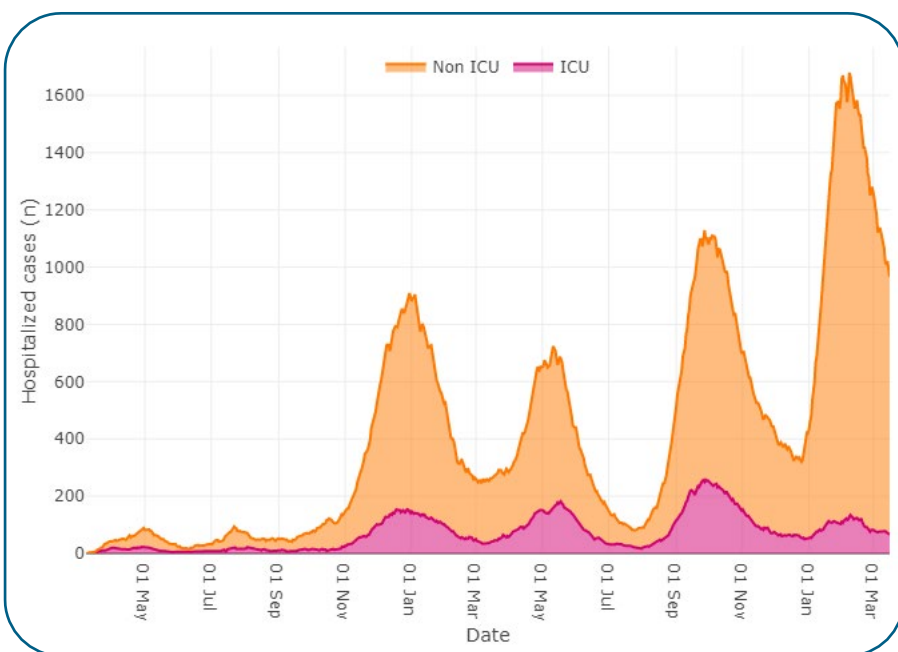
For the seven-day period ending on March 16, there was an average of 504 new cases of COVID-19 per day, compared to 459 cases per day the previous reporting period (March 3 to March 9), a 9.8 per cent increase. The Calgary Zone reported the highest total number of new cases with 1,304 (an average of 186 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.

Hospitalizations

On March 16, 900 individuals were in non-ICU hospital beds for COVID-19 compared to 1,024 individuals on March 9, a 12.1 per cent decrease.



Variants of Concern

Alberta Precision Laboratories continues to closely monitor SARS-CoV-2 variants. From March 8-14, an average of 71 per cent of positive samples were strain-typed. Of those, the seven-day rolling average was 59 per cent Omicron BA.1 lineage and 41 per cent Omicron BA.2. Delta is rarely detected. The BA.2 sub-lineage continues trending to higher proportions, as has been seen in other countries where Omicron BA.2 is now the predominant strain. While viral recombinants between Omicron and Delta have been reported in several cases globally, no recombinant SARS-CoV-2 viruses have been detected in Alberta through our ongoing genomic sequencing.

Other notable COVID-19-related information:

- Data from the last seven days indicate 40.8 per cent of new admissions to non-ICU spaces are due to COVID-19 infection directly, 29.1 per cent had COVID-19 as a contributing cause and 30.1 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 41.4 per cent; 31.0 per cent had COVID-19 as a contributing cause and 27.6 per cent were incidental infections or unclear.
- As of March 16, 4,019 individuals have passed away from COVID-19, including 27 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 March 16, 533,783 cases of COVID-19 have been detected in Alberta and 21,923 individuals have been hospitalized, which amounts to 4.1 individuals for every 100 cases. In all, 523,212 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 March 10 to March 16, 17,144 COVID-19 tests were completed, a seven-day average of 2,449 tests per day. During this period, the daily positivity ranged from 16.6 per cent to 25.7 per cent. As of March 16, a total of 6.9 million tests have been conducted and 2.7 million

individuals have been tested. COVID-19 testing eligibility has changed to accommodate the demand due to the increase in cases.

COVID-19 Updates and New Information You Need to Know

Join the President's Speaker Series on April 4

You're invited to join an online discussion on COVID-19's impact on the economy at the President's Speaker Series on April 4 from 12 - 1 p.m.

COVID-19 has caused a significant drain on government and business revenues, and there will likely be lasting implications on public sector finances in Alberta and Canada, and the global economy. Healthcare is not immune to these implications, and we must consider the future impact.

Our keynote speaker is [Pedro Antunes](#), Chief Economist and primary spokesperson at The Conference Board of Canada. In his presentation, Antunes will discuss the lasting impacts of the pandemic on Alberta's healthcare system, both in terms of demand for services and how COVID-19 has affected the province's healthcare workforce.

[Register here](#). Questions? Email PSS@ahs.ca.

Amended AHS immunization policy now available for review

AHS amended its [Immunization of Workers for COVID-19 Policy](#) as directed by the government. The updated policy is now posted to Insite.

The change allows any worker currently on a leave of absence due to their immunization status to return to work by March 31. The directive also removes the requirement for rapid testing before shifts for unimmunized workers. The requirement to be fully immunized will remain in place for new hires. Any worker hired after Nov. 30, 2021, must be fully immunized against COVID-19.

Change has been a constant throughout the pandemic. We recognize that we've all faced challenges during this time and we are extremely grateful to our teams, including leaders and medical leaders, for their ongoing support and for going above and beyond as we continue to respond to the pandemic.

We also appreciate that another change to this policy may cause frustration and stress among our people. It's important for us to keep our focus on how we support each other and create safe workplaces for all. See the [Information for Workers](#) resource for guidance on having respectful conversations about COVID-19 immunization in the workplace.

Questions? See the [Worker FAQ](#). For additional questions, we encourage you to speak with your medical leader.

COVID-19 Immunization Update

Pediatric walk-in vaccine appointments still available

Walk-in vaccine appointments continue to be available for children ages five to 11 at most AHS COVID-19 vaccine clinics.

Until March 31, AHS clinics will offer flexible hours with some evening availability to maximize the opportunities for eligible children to be immunized. Availability in the evening and on weekends varies throughout the province. To find an AHS clinic with extended hours and walk-in appointments, visit ahs.ca/vaccine#walkin.

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

Changes to travel restrictions

As of April 1, the [Government of Canada](#) will be lifting the pre-arrival COVID-19 testing requirement at the border for fully vaccinated travellers.

Passengers may still be subjected to random PCR testing at the airport, and travellers will still be required to use the [ArriveCAN App](#) to enter their proof of vaccination.

Currently, fully vaccinated travellers are required to show proof of a negative rapid antigen test administered by a lab, healthcare entity or other authorized provider before boarding a scheduled flight or arrival at the land border.

For more information, please visit [COVID-19: Travel, testing and borders](#)

Beyond COVID-19

Influenza Immunization Update

As of March 17, 1.2 million doses of influenza vaccine have been administered, which means 27 per cent of the population has been immunized. A total of 54 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](#). Starting today, and for the remainder of the season, influenza data will be reported monthly.

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 using these options are reminded to submit their [Got My Flu Shot form](#). See [Insite](#) for more on the immunization campaign.

MD Culture Shift

Learn about, and register for, the following upcoming events in [MD Culture Shift's March 2022 Newsletter](#):

- Physician Leadership Institute course: Talent Management for Exceptional Leadership
- MD Culture Shift Community of Practice
- Trauma Informed Leadership Workshops
- Equity in Medicine Conference

Survey Research on Double Duty Caregivers

Dr. Jasneet Parmar, professor in the Department of Family Medicine at the University of Alberta, and her research team, want to understand how the pandemic and double-duty caregiving has impacted Canadian healthcare providers' caregiving and work experiences. They are inviting all Canadian healthcare providers who are also family caregivers to [complete a survey](#). It will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

A double-duty caregiver is a healthcare provider who also provides care outside of work to a family member, chosen family or friend who is ill, disabled, or frail.

For more information or if you have questions, please contact [Dr. Sharon Anderson](#).

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 \(CPSA\)](#).

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 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.

Dr. Francois Belanger

Chief Medical Officer and Vice President, Quality

Dr. Laura McDougall

Senior Medical Officer of Health