

CMO SMOH Notice for AHS Medical Staff

April 1, 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 Prepared as Ukraine Evacuees Arrive
- Ukrainian Evacuee Temporary Health Benefits Program
- Support for Physicians
- Paxlovid Available at More Alberta Pharmacies
- Influenza Immunization Update
- 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
 - Updates to Designated Support Person and Visitor Guidance
 - Verna's Weekly Video Message: What We've Learned about Family Presence and Visitation
 - COVID-19 Immunization Update
- Beyond COVID-19
 - MD Culture Shift
 - New Physician Recruitment Website Launched
 - HQCA Launches Campaign to Encourage Albertans to be Active in their Healthcare
- Additional Resources for Physicians

AHS Prepared as Ukraine Evacuees Arrive

AHS is actively working to [prepare for the arrival](#) and subsequent healthcare needs of evacuees. As we have done and continue to do, AHS is always looking to ensure that everyone receives the healthcare support they need, regardless of where they are from or the circumstances that brought them to seek aid.

Last week, we shared a request for volunteers from physicians and staff who speak Ukrainian, Russian or both languages and received close to 90 responses. This is overwhelming and heartwarming, and we want to thank everyone who has offered their assistance. At this time, we have enough volunteers to meet our current demands and will reach out if additional support is needed.

We have also received offers to donate supplies or equipment; however, AHS is currently not collecting donations. We encourage you to review the [Government of Canada website](#) which provides information about how you can help during a disaster abroad or to reach out to your communities to find out how donations can support evacuees in need.

This past Monday (March 28), four AHS staff members from Edmonton Zone were on the ground at Edmonton International Airport to welcome a charter flight of Ukrainian evacuees, including three dogs belonging to the evacuees. Our staff were there to support the evacuees' arrival, provide information about health services and respond to any urgent medical needs.

AHS is preparing for additional arrivals in the weeks to come and we will be ready to support the healthcare needs of any evacuees who stay in Alberta for the foreseeable future. This work involves several areas of AHS. We'd like to thank every physician and staff member for stepping up to assist. Every evacuee will be given access to the healthcare support they require, and all facilities and providers are reminded to [accept any requests for care free of charge](#).

Our thoughts remain with everyone impacted by the war in Ukraine. AHS has launched a webpage for those who are looking for [support or resources](#). We anticipate many evacuees arriving in our province will not have English as their first language. Physicians, including Primary Care Network members and Primary Care physicians can now use the following dedicated number at no cost to access an Ukrainian or Russian [professional medical interpreter: 1-833-955-2171](#), as well as share a page with resources [translated in Ukrainian](#).

For any other languages, please use your regular Language Line number (regular cost). If you do not know your number please contact Kaya at kayathiri.ganeshamoorthy@ahs.ca

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

Ukrainian Evacuee Temporary Health Benefits Program

The Government of Alberta released [Bulletin Gen 136](#) providing guidance around their Ukrainian Evacuee Temporary Health Benefits Program (UETHBP). Ukraine evacuees arriving in Alberta on Feb. 24, 2022 or after (those who have evacuated Ukraine or cannot return to Ukraine), will be covered under the UETHBP.

This program will provide temporary coverage to Ukrainian evacuees, including for physician services who do not qualify for registration and coverage under the *Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan* (AHCIP) and *Hospital Benefits Plan*, or other public health benefits because they are not considered residents or deemed residents, as defined in the *Alberta Health Care Insurance Act*.

Evacuees may present for medical care before they are enrolled with the UETHBP and receive an Alberta Personal Health Care Number (PHN). Alberta Health requests your support to provide insured services to Ukrainian evacuees without a PHN as payment can occur retroactively once the individual is enrolled in the UETHBP.

If you have any questions, please contact Alberta Health.

Support for Physicians

In November 2021, the Canadian Medical Association (CMA) conducted the National Physician Health Survey, and preliminary data is showing that 53 per cent of physicians and medical learners have experienced a high level of burnout, compared to 30 per cent in a similar survey conducted in 2017. This reaffirms the need to focus on physician wellness, and additional work to mitigate burnout, as recommended in the recent rapid review conducted by our Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) on mitigating healthcare worker burnout.

We know many of us are feeling the impact of cumulative stresses over the past two years, as well as compassion fatigue. We want to do all we can to ensure the well-being and psychological safety of everyone at AHS. We encourage you to reach out to your leadership, your colleagues, or access the following resources available for support:

- [Crisis Management Services](#)
- [Employee and Family Assistance Program \(EFAP\)](#)
- [Alberta Medical Association Physician and Family Support Program](#)
- [Creating a Psychologically Safe and Healthy Workplace, Together](#)
- [How to Support Someone Who May be Struggling](#)
- [Not Myself Today](#)

- [Resources to Support Mental Health](#)
- [Supporting someone who expresses suicidal ideation](#)
- [Resilience, Wellness and Mental Health Resource Guide](#)
- [Diversity and Inclusion resources](#)
- [Employee recognition](#)

To learn more about the CMA survey and SAG rapid review, please visit the following:

- [CMA survey](#)
- [Verna vlog](#)
- [SAG rapid review](#)

Additionally, please see more information below about the Physician & Family Support Program.



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). 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

[Paxlovid Available at More Alberta Pharmacies](#)

Paxlovid, a COVID-19 antiviral medication, is now available at more pharmacies across the province. Albertans who meet [eligibility criteria](#) must call Health Link at 1-844-343-0971. Health Link staff will ask screening questions to confirm eligibility and arrange for next steps. Paxlovid must be started within five days of the onset of COVID-19 symptoms. Albertans are asked to not call pharmacies or physician offices directly. Pharmacies providing Paxlovid in their communities can be [found online](#).

[Influenza Immunization Update](#)

Sudden increase in influenza cases and outbreaks in Alberta

While there were no reported influenza cases in Alberta in all of the 2020-21 season, and there have been only sporadic cases of influenza reported in the province since December 2021, we have seen a sudden spike in the past two weeks.

On March 13, the province had a total of 17 confirmed cases. As of March 26, a total of 124 laboratory-confirmed seasonal influenza cases were reported, including two Influenza A outbreaks reported this week. These are the first influenza outbreaks reported for this influenza season and both are in continuing care sites; one is in South Zone (Lethbridge) and the other is in Calgary Zone (Calgary). So far this season, nine hospitalizations have been reported and no deaths.

These cases are a reminder that you can be contagious with influenza before you even feel sick. No one wants to be the reason someone else gets sick; and, no one wants to get sick. In addition to being immunized, wash your hands often, practice good respiratory etiquette, physical distancing, and masking and stay home when sick.

Please note, the 2020-2021 Alberta Influenza Immunization program has ended for the general public. March 31 was the last day for members of the general public to receive influenza immunization. Eligible children under the age of nine who have received one dose of the influenza vaccine prior to March 31, will be offered their second dose until April 30. [Click here](#) for more information on how to book. And, if you got your influenza vaccine at a [public health clinic](#), pharmacy or doctor's office, please remember to complete the [Got My Flu Shot Form](#).

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 Kim Kelly.

For the past year, Dr. Kelly has been one of three physician leaders in the Wellness, Diversity and Development portfolio. She works with leaders, primarily from the Edmonton and North Zone, to grow their knowledge in Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and Anti-Racism actions. Her role has recently been expanded to include leaders from across the province.

"I am proud of AHS' institutional courage to prioritize the 'messy' and often uncomfortable Diversity and Inclusion work. This work also requires individual courage and humility. I extend my gratitude to leaders who listen, learn, grow and try to do better each day."

Since 2018, Dr. Kelly has led a group of physicians that are part of the national Equity in Medicine team. This is a team who challenges the status quo and speaks truth to power. Dr. Kelly admits it can be difficult work, but is also rewarding.

"It feels like we are in a rapid time of transition in healthcare and in society. As a change agent, I am excited every day to wake up and explore where we can spark positive change together!"

From us and your teams, thank you, Dr. Kelly, 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., AHS has 217 general adult ICU beds open in Alberta, including 44 additional spaces above our baseline of 173 general adult ICU beds. There are currently 163 patients in ICU. Provincially, ICU capacity (including additional surge beds) is currently at 75 per cent, up from 71 per cent a week ago. Without the additional surge spaces, provincial ICU capacity would be at 94 per cent, up from 90 per cent a week ago.

New and Active Cases

For the seven-day period ending on March 28, there was an average of 659 new cases of COVID-19 per day, compared to 519 daily new cases the previous reporting period (March 15-21), a 27 per cent increase. The Calgary Zone reported the highest total number of new cases with 1,842 (an average of 263 new cases per day). All five zones reported an increase in the number of new cases this reporting period, compared to the previous week as you can see in the table below:

Zone	New Cases (March 22-28)	New Cases (March 15-21)	Percent Change
Calgary	1,842	1,444	+27.6%
Edmonton	1,481	1,114	+32.9%
North	383	297	+29.0%
Central	538	419	+28.4%
South	358	352	+1.7%
Unknown	10	4	+150.0%
Total	4,612	3,630	+27.1%

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. Alberta Health has stopped reporting the number of active COVID-19 cases.

Hospitalizations

On March 28, 917 individuals were in non-ICU hospital beds for COVID-19, compared to 930 on March 21, a 1.4 per cent decrease.

Variants of Concern

APL continues to closely monitor SARS-CoV-2 variants. From March 22-28, an average of 81 per cent of positive samples were strain-typed. Of those, the seven-day rolling average was 74 per cent Omicron BA.2 lineage, 26 per cent Omicron BA.1, and Delta was detected once. The BA.2 sub-lineage 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 36.9 per cent of new admissions to non-ICU spaces are due to COVID-19 infection directly, 32.5 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 29.2 per cent; 41.7 per cent had COVID-19 as a contributing cause and 29.1 per cent were incidental infections or unclear.
- As of March 28, 4,074 individuals have passed away from COVID-19, including 30 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 March 28, 540,733 cases of COVID-19 have been detected in Alberta and 22,561 individuals have been hospitalized, which amounts to 4.2 individuals for every 100 cases.

- From March 22-28, 19,036 COVID-19 tests were completed, a seven-day average of 2,719 tests per day. During this period, the daily positivity ranged from 21.7 per cent to 27.1 per cent.

COVID-19 Updates and New Information You Need to Know

Updates to Designated Support Person and Visitor Guidance

The [Designated Support Person and Visitor Access Guidance](#) was updated earlier this week, and several changes have been made which ease restrictions on designated support persons (DSPs) and visitors.

These changes include:

- The addition of the CMOH exemption from isolation for individuals wishing to visit a patient who is at end of life.
- Accommodating two DSPs for maternity patients (an increase from one DSP previously).
- Accommodating two DSPs simultaneously in most inpatient care areas.
- Accommodating four DSPs to be designated for long-stay patients (a stay of 10 days or more) with two DSPs able to be present with the patient simultaneously.
- Updated guidance regarding DSP access during an outbreak.
- Removing limits on the frequency of sibling visits for pediatric patients (visits will still need to be pre-arranged and approved by site administration/designate and in consultation with Infection Prevention and Control).
- Expanding bedside access for critical care during potential loss of life and end-of-life situations to all identified support persons and visitors (as approved by site administration/designate).

All changes listed above are subject to the service area's ability and site configuration allowing for physical distancing between individuals not from the same household.

Key safety precautions remain in place. All DSPs and visitors will continue to be required to comply with AHS screening processes, continuous masking, minimizing movement within the site, hand-hygiene and any other infection prevention and control measures as may be required to enter a site.

The Visitation Taskforce aims to balance the need for family presence with the protection of patients, residents, staff, sites and services. The taskforce will continue to monitor the status of COVID-19 in Alberta and adapt visitation guidelines accordingly.

For more information, visit ahs.ca/visitation.

Verna's Weekly Video Message — What We've Learned about Family Presence and Visitation

As we know, family and loved ones play an essential role in the emotional, physical and mental well-being of our patients and residents. We continue to work with families and facilities to welcome family presence and visitation wherever we can, while looking after the safety of patients and staff throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Now that it's been more than two years since the pandemic began, we're looking at what we've learned and what visitation may look like as we move forward. This week, vlog guest host Dr. Mark Joffe — Vice President & Medical Director, Cancer Care Alberta, Clinical Support Services & Provincial Clinical Excellence — sits down with our interviewees to get [their thoughts on this topic](#):

- Dr. Jim Silvius, Senior Medical Director, Provincial Seniors Health and Continuing Care, and co-lead of the Family Presence and Visitation Taskforce
- Deanna Picklyk, Director, Engagement and Patient Experience

COVID-19 Immunization Update

Federal travel changes now in place

Today (April 1), the Public Health Agency of Canada lifted the pre-arrival COVID-19 testing requirement for fully vaccinated travellers. Passengers might 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. Requirements for unvaccinated or partially vaccinated travellers are not changing.

Unless otherwise exempt, all travellers five years of age or older who do not qualify as fully vaccinated must continue to provide proof of an accepted type of pre-entry [COVID-19 test result](#).

For more information, please refer to the Government of Canada's [COVID-19: Travel, Testing and Borders](#) for current Canadian travel requirements.

Moderna for Albertans aged six to 11 years

Following the Health Canada approval of the Moderna Spikevax vaccine for children six to 11 years old, Alberta Health continues to determine vaccine allocation and eligibility criteria within the province.

The mRNA COVID-19 vaccines for children use a smaller dose than for those who are 12 years of age and older. This is because, in clinical trials, lower doses provided children with excellent protection against COVID-19.

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recommends children five to 11 years old receive two doses of an mRNA vaccine with the second dose administered at least eight weeks after the first dose. For children who are moderately to severely immunocompromised, the recommendation is three doses.

Please watch for further information from Alberta Health and AHS about when this vaccine might be available for Albertans aged six to 11 years of age.

Beyond COVID-19

MD Culture Shift

Check out the latest edition of the [MD Culture Shift newsletter](#).

Physician Leader Healing Group

A new facilitated peer-support group for physician leaders, the Trauma-informed Leadership Healing Group, will be offered virtually to AHS physician leaders who self-identify as having experienced trauma and diversity struggles within their workplace settings, to support their healing and enhance their effectiveness as leaders.

Objectives for participants:

- To experience a facilitated space to share experiences of trauma and/or diversity struggles and receive support
- To gain knowledge and skills that promote personal growth
- To gain knowledge and skills that can be applied to members of teams

When: Thurs, Apr. 14 7–8:30 p.m., recurring every two weeks for six sessions

Note: Each session will feature a different topic. Opt in as your schedule allows.

Registration link: [Physician Healing Group Registration](#). Register early, as there is a maximum of 20 participants allowed.

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

Co-facilitators:

Dr. Irina Mihaescu, Psychiatrist & Trauma-Informed leadership trainer

Dr. Ghazala Radwi, Hematologist & Trauma-informed leadership trainer

AHS Representative:

Dr. Kim Kelly, Wellness, Diversity and Development Portfolio & Trauma-informed leadership trainer

Trauma-Informed Leadership 3 hour workshops

Trauma-Informed Leadership brings recognition to the collective trauma of the pandemic and other work associated trauma impacting physician well-being. Learn the principles of trauma-informed leadership to enhance your skills as a compassionate leader.

Upcoming offerings:

- May 5, 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.
- May 11, 5:30 – 8:30 p.m.

To register, email: jodi.ploquin@ahs.ca

Equity in Medicine Conference

Equity in Medicine's [second annual virtual conference](#) is now open for registration. Grow your EDI (equity, diversity & inclusion) competencies and learn more about the multiple actions necessary to advance EDI in our healthcare environments. Open to physicians, non-physicians, medical students and residents with access to the recording for six months. CME accreditation in-progress.

New Physician Recruitment Website Launched

AHS has launched its new physician career site and platform, [Doctor Jobs Alberta](#). Visitors familiar with the old recruitment site will notice the following changes:

- **New website address:** The recruitment site's web address has changed to <https://doctorjobsalberta.albertahealthservices.ca>. Visitors to the old web address will be redirected to this new site.
- **Same name, new look and feel:** The new recruitment site is still called "Doctor Jobs Alberta," but it has a different look and feel. A guide is available on the [help page](#) of the new site to help candidates through the application process.
- **One central location for AHS physician job opportunities:** The new [Doctor Jobs Alberta](#) houses all physician job opportunities associated with AHS, including those for Alberta Precision Laboratories and Cancer Care.

This change does not impact AHS' staff career site (<https://albertahealthservices.ca/careers/>). Please email DrJobs.AB@ahs.ca with any questions.

HQCA Launches Campaign to Encourage Albertans to be Active in their Healthcare

The Health Quality Council of Alberta has launched a campaign to help increase awareness about the importance of being active participants in a healthcare team. The HQCA has developed several resources for individuals, such as tips for before, during and after a visit with a healthcare team, questions to ask, and a symptom tracker. AHS physicians and staff are encouraged to direct patients to hqca.ca/info.

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. Braden Manns on behalf of Dr. Francois Belanger

Associate Chief Medical Officer

Dr. Laura McDougall

Senior Medical Officer of Health

