

# CMO SMOH Notice for AHS Medical Staff

Aug. 26, 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.

Note: Recognizing some medical staff use an alternate email address instead of an AHS email address, some information is duplicated from the CEO Update to ensure all AHS medical staff have all up-to-date organizational information that may impact their practice.

## Topics:

- Medical Affairs
  - Support for Physicians
  - Reminder: Decommissioning of Standardized Mini-Mental State Examination
  - Interim CEO Video Message: Following up on the Our People Pulse Survey
  - eScripton Upgrade Coming to AHS Calgary Zone and Edmonton and Calgary Covenant Health sites Sept. 13
- AHS Priorities
- COVID-19 Updates
  - COVID-19 Case Status in Alberta
  - Now Available: COVID-19 Vaccine Booster Dose for Albertans Ages Five to 11
  - COVID Corner: Don't Trip in the Fall - COVID Community, Therapeutic, and Pediatric Updates
- Additional Resources for Physicians

## Medical Affairs

### Support for Physicians

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.

### **Well Doc Alberta Workshop: Navigating the Inner Storms of Uncertainty**

Well Doc Alberta is offering a virtual workshop on Sept. 20, led by Dr. Ghazala Radwi MD, on Navigating the Inner Storms of Uncertainty. The workshop is open to physicians across Alberta, and space is limited. For more information and to register, please [Well Doc Alberta](#).

### Reminder: Decommissioning of Standardized Mini-Mental State Examination

Standardized Mini-Mental State Examination (SMMSE) and all Mini-Mental State Examination (MMSE) forms will be decommissioned by Aug. 31. This will include all paper and electronic versions of the tool.

We are asking units and programs who have previously ordered or printed these forms to discard any remaining or photocopied forms prior to Aug. 31. Photocopying existing forms or using unofficial forms with these tools beyond Aug. 31 would violate copyright and therefore cannot be supported.

To learn more about alternative tools, FAQs and available webinars, please visit the [Cognitive Screening webpage](#), and see the following resources:

- [Frequently asked questions](#)
- [Cognitive screening webinar](#)

For clinical practice questions, please contact [practice.consultation@ahs.ca](mailto:practice.consultation@ahs.ca)

### **Interim CEO Video Message: Following up on the Our People Pulse Survey**

We are extremely proud of the quality care you provide to Albertans every day and night, but know the past two and a half years haven't been easy. Many of you are feeling the impacts - we can see this in the Pulse Survey results from the spring.

In the survey, you told us there's an ongoing need to provide you and your teams support as we continue to recover from the pandemic. The results also show that while you are often satisfied in your work, there are opportunities to support workload concerns. This comes as no surprise, given the demands that responding to COVID-19 has had on everyone.

We want to help find meaningful solutions and support you and your teams to focus on your mental health and wellbeing as we move beyond pandemic response. Joining Mauro to [discuss this further](#) are:

- Dr. Mircea Fagarasanu, Senior Program Officer, Workplace Health and Safety
- Mona Sikal, Executive Director, Employee Relations
- Dr. Francois Belanger, Vice President, Quality and Chief Medical Officer

### **eScription Upgrade Coming to AHS Calgary Zone and Edmonton and Calgary Covenant Health sites Sept. 13**

AHS' dictation/transcription platform is being upgraded from eScription Large Hospital (LH) to eScription One (eSOne). AHS Calgary Zone and Edmonton and Calgary Covenant Health sites are scheduled to upgrade on Sept. 13, with an anticipated completion of all areas by November 2022.

While the functionality of eSOne is similar to the current eScription LH changes you can expect include:

- A new dictation telephone number
- Some keypad prompts
- A new website for signing off reports

Please continue to monitor your email for further details and updates regarding the transition to eSOne. If you have any questions, please reach out to [speechrecognition@ahs.ca](mailto:speechrecognition@ahs.ca).

### **AHS Priorities**

This message includes updates on the progress AHS is making on its 10 priority areas:

1. Alberta Surgical Initiative
2. Continuing Care
3. Digital Health Evolution & Innovation
4. EMS 10-Point Plan
5. Mental Health & Addiction Recovery
6. Public Health & Pandemic Response and Recovery
7. Quality & Patient Outcomes
8. Rural Initiatives & Engagement
9. Sustainability
10. Workforce Recruitment & Retention

Each week will include updates on specific initiatives connected to some of the 10 priorities. We have much to accomplish together in these areas, so we want to make sure our teams have the most current information on the work underway and the work ahead.

### **Priority: Alberta Surgical Initiative (ASI)**

The ASI will improve timely access to surgical care in Alberta. The goal of ASI is to ensure adult and pediatric patients receive scheduled surgeries within clinically appropriate timeframes.

### ***Surgical wait list status update***

We continue to work diligently to recover to pre-pandemic surgical status. Over the past four weeks, the average weekly volume for surgical activity is 87 per cent of our pre-pandemic surgical volumes. It is important to note that AHS is now using summer weekly baselines, which are lower than standard baselines. This is typically done over the summer months to account for summer vacation schedules.

Our total surgical wait list for adults sits at approximately 72,600, compared to approximately 72,860 at the beginning of May. In February 2020, before the pandemic, our total wait list was 68,000.

Approximately 87,600 surgeries have been completed in the 2022/23 fiscal year.

### ***AHS continues to reduce wait times for cancer surgeries***

The Government of Alberta [announced](#) Alberta's cancer surgery program is operating at nearly 115 per cent of pre-pandemic surgical volumes, with a larger proportion completed within a clinically appropriate timeframe.

Through the strategies under the ASI, AHS continues to increase surgical activity in the province to get Albertans the surgical care they need within clinically recommended wait times. As part of the ASI, prioritization of patients such as Edmonton-based AHS Patient Advisor, Susan Ruddick, was a strategy implemented during the pandemic to ensure those most acute received their surgery when they needed it.

Edmonton resident Susan Ruddick was scheduled for cancer surgery last September.

"This was at the height of the pandemic and I was worried about surgery cancellations," she says. "I started looking elsewhere just in case my surgery was cancelled but the delays were happening across the country. My surgery was delayed by a week but I still got in at the end of September."

Read Susan's story [here](#).

For more information and updates on the ASI, please visit [ahs.ca/asi](https://ahs.ca/asi).

## **COVID-19 Updates**

**Please note: Due to changes in reporting by Alberta Health, some statistics (e.g., new and active COVID-19 cases) are no longer available.**

### **COVID-19 Case Status in Alberta**

#### ***Hospitalizations and ICU Update***

As of Aug. 23:

- 838 individuals were in non-ICU hospital beds with COVID-19, compared to 762 on August 9, a 10 per cent increase.
- 32 individuals were in ICU hospital beds with COVID-19, compared to 30 on August 9, a 6.7 per cent increase.

#### ***Variants of Concern***

Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) continues to closely monitor SARS-CoV-2 variants. From August 16 - 22, an average of 67 per cent of positive samples were strain-typed. Of those, the seven-day rolling average was 2 per cent Omicron BA.2 lineage, 6 per cent Omicron BA.4 lineage, and 92 per cent Omicron BA.5 lineage.

As global data is updated, sub-lineage designations are refined which may affect lineage calls in Alberta. We continue to monitor our data and adjust as information becomes available. While BA.4 and BA.5 appear to transmit more readily than BA.2 due to their ability to evade immunity from immunization or prior infection, there is no evidence that they cause more severe disease than other Omicron lineages.

Recombinant SARS-CoV-2 strains have been detected and are circulating in Alberta, as well as across Canada and the world at very low levels. The recombinants detected in Alberta are recombinants within the Omicron lineage and are not thought to be of any increased biological concern compared with the predominant BA.2 strain. Recombinants occur as part of the evolution of SARS-CoV-2, and are being monitored as we remain in frequent communication with our provincial and national public health partners.

### ***Wastewater Surveillance***

Wastewater can provide an early indication of infection trends in a community. For wastewater surveillance comparing weekly averages:

- Six sites increased by more than 25 per cent compared to the weekly average two weeks ago. These sites were Medicine Hat, Brooks, High River, Red Deer & Area, City of Edmonton and Fort McMurray. The other 14 sites decreased or had no significant changes. These observations were from Aug. 22 at noon.

Frequency of reporting updates varies by sampling site. The Alberta Wastewater Surveillance Program is a collaboration between the University of Calgary, University of Alberta, APL and Alberta Health.

### ***Other Notable COVID-19-related Information:***

- As of Aug 23, 4,748 individuals have passed away from COVID-19, including 54 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 Aug 23, a total of 29,322 individuals have been hospitalized with COVID-19 in Alberta.
- From August 9 to August 23, 22,962 COVID-19 tests were completed, a 14-day average of 1,640 tests per day. During this period, the daily positivity ranged from 16.49 per cent to 26.01 per cent.

### **Now Available: COVID-19 Vaccine Booster Dose for Albertans Ages Five to 11**

Starting Aug. 29, all Albertans five to 11 years of age can book a booster dose of Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine at least five months after receiving their previous dose. First appointments will roll out on Aug. 31. Appointments for booster doses can be booked through the Alberta vaccine [booking system](#), Health Link at 811, at [participating pharmacies](#) or a participating physicians' office.

Parents can [register their child online](#) in advance of appointment availability.

Children five to 11 years of age who live in First Nations communities can access a booster dose through public health clinics or nursing stations.

An [AHS webpage](#) is available to help parents, guardians and families make the best decision about the COVID-19 vaccine for their children. It features videos that provide advice from top pediatric specialists as well as resources to help fearful children cope with needles.

For more information about getting children immunized or about the booster dose, we encourage parents to visit the [AHS website](#), talk to their pediatrician or family physician, or speak with a registered nurse by calling Health Link at 811.

### **COVID Corner: Don't Trip in the Fall - COVID Community, Therapeutic, and Pediatric Updates**

On Sept. 7, from 7 to 9 p.m., the Cumming School of Medicine presents the next COVID Corner session. Learning objectives include:

- Summarize current data from community monitoring, including wastewater data, new development with TARRANT Watch, and other provincial initiatives
- Describe outpatient therapeutic options available for COVID-19
- Review the pediatric COVID-19 vaccine evidence and provide practical advice on how to address vaccine hesitancy
- Recognize the trends in emergency room data and respiratory health concerns in children as the school season begins

[Get more information and register now.](#)

### **Additional Resources for Physicians:**

- [AHS Virtual Health](#)
- [COVID-19 Healthcare Professional information page](#)
- [COVID-19 Immunization Information](#)
- [COVID-19 Resources for Community Physicians](#)
- [CPSA's Physician Portal](#)
- [Cumming School of Medicine Continuing Medical Education \(CME\) Resources](#)
- [How to Access AHS Insite and Email](#)
- [IPC Emerging Issues](#)
- [MD News Digest](#)
- [Physician & Family Support Program](#) - 1-877-SOS-4MDS (767-4637)
- [Physician Wellness Educational Resources: Well Doc Alberta](#)

**Sincerely,**

**Dr. Francois Belanger**  
Chief Medical Officer

**Dr. David Strong on behalf of Dr. Laura McDougall**  
Medical Officer of Health



Healthy Albertans.  
Healthy Communities.  
**Together.**