

CMO SMOH Notice for AHS Medical Staff

Sept. 23, 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.

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Fallen EMS Colleague Mourned

This past Wednesday, EMS colleagues said goodbye to one of their own: advanced care paramedic Dallas Boyko.

Dallas was given full EMS honours in a procession that brought together more than 1,000 colleagues and members of the first responder community from EMS, police and fire, from across the province and the country, including representatives from B.C., Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick.

This was followed by a memorial service with her family, colleagues and many members of the community whose lives were touched by Dallas.

Throughout her distinguished 25-year career, Dallas treated thousands of patients with tremendous courage, compassion and skill. She mentored and precepted hundreds of students and new staff, and made dozens of close friendships throughout her time with Associated Ambulance, Parkland Ambulance and AHS.

As a sign of her tremendous dedication and service, Dallas was awarded the 12-year provincial service medal, in addition to countless commendations from patients, families, peers and

supervisors. EMS is incredibly grateful for Dallas's many years of service and we share our deepest condolences with her family, friends, colleagues and all who knew her, on this unimaginable loss.

We would also like to thank advanced care paramedic Mitch Fagnan, who was on duty with Dallas and with her in the collision. Despite his injuries, Mitch selflessly and immediately provided medical assistance to Dallas after the collision. We are enormously grateful for the bravery shown by Mitch and commend him on his actions.

As a reminder, if you need to talk, want help, counselling or any other supports, please know resources are available:

- You can reach the [Physician & Family Support Program \(PFSP\)](#) at 1-877-767-4637.
- More information is also available on [Insite](#).
- Critical Incident Stress Management and Peer Support Program: 1-855-512-4127
- Mental Health Help Line: 1-877-303-2642

Exclusive Film Access for AHS Physicians and Staff: National Day for Truth and Reconciliation is Sept. 30.

The film *Kímmapiiyipitssini: The Meaning of Empathy*, by Elle-Máijá Tailfeathers, chronicles the impact of the opioid crisis in Blood Reserve in Southern Alberta. It focuses on her home, the Kainai First Nation, where her mother, Dr. Esther Tailfeathers, Senior Medical Director for the AHS Indigenous Wellness Core, works to support and educate families affected by the overdose epidemic. The film presents a series of first-hand accounts from local first responders, healthcare professionals, and people with substance-use disorder.

As we approach National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on Sept. 30, we truly hope you take some time to experience the film and encourage your staff to watch it with an open heart. There is much this film can teach us.

Please [share the video](#) with your teams and don't forget to mark Sept. 29 in your calendars. The Indigenous Wellness Core is hosting virtual education sessions from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. next Thursday to commemorate National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. Join us to learn more about how you can become an ally and support the journey towards reconciliation.

You can find more information on the [National Day for Truth & Reconciliation webpage](#) or join the conversation at [Together4Health](#).

Medical Affairs

Support for Physicians

Our People Strategy 2.0 details AHS' commitment to taking care of the people who make up the organization's workforce. It focuses on how AHS is working to create a safe, healthy and inclusive workplace where people can bring their whole selves to work. An important goal of Our People Strategy 2.0 is to increase psychological safety, mental health and wellness supports to help build a resilient workforce to deliver safe and efficient patient care. Providing opportunities to talk about moral distress, and helping connect healthcare workers to supportive resources that can help address moral distress, is an important part of achieving that goal. As part of this work, AHS has developed some new resources that are now available online:

- [Webinar](#)
- [Resource Guide](#)

In addition to these resources, we are also working to develop and update content on our [Physician Wellness, Diversity and Development webpage](#) to host resources specific to our medical staff. Please bookmark this page and keep an eye out for updates as they are available.

Physician Leaders Healing Group Fall 2022 Session

In the spring of 2022, Dr. Kim Kelly of the AHS Wellness, Diversity and Development portfolio led and implemented the Physician Leaders' Healing Group. It was the first initiative of its kind at AHS. Six 90-minute sessions, co-facilitated by trauma-informed leaders, Dr. Ghazala Radwi and Dr. Diana Meakins, were held for physician leaders. A safe space was created in which participants could share their experiences of trauma and diversity challenges and receive support.

Survey responses were overwhelmingly positive for continuing this initiative. In addition, all respondents indicated the sessions contributed to their own personal growth and healing, as well as learnings that could be shared with their teams.

Due to the success of the first offering, AHS is sponsoring a second offering of this initiative for AHS physician leaders. These sessions will be led by trauma-informed physician co-facilitators. Please register [here](#) to attend sessions occurring every two weeks on Thursday evenings from 7 to 8:30 p.m., with the first session on Oct. 6 and the final session on Dec. 15. Space is limited.

Medical Affairs Recruitment Efforts

Ensuring Albertans have access to healthcare in their community is of utmost importance to AHS. Our goal is always to keep our sites operating as normal to ensure that patients receive safe quality care where and when they need it. To achieve this goal, it is critical we retain and recruit a healthy workforce.

AHS has a dedicated team in place focused on implementing solutions to support recruitment efforts across the province, including the following:

- Attending a number of recruitment events, one of which is happening this weekend: [St. Paul's Emergency Medicine Conference](#): Sept. 22 to 25;
- Expanding recruitment efforts through enhanced marketing efforts;
- Aggressively pursuing both Canadian and internationally-trained physicians;
- Exploring options to improve the international sponsorship program;
- Collaborating with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta to prioritize and expedite the assessment and licensing of International Medical Graduates;
- Posting part-time positions to provide additional flexibility for physicians, and providing incentives for full-time positions;
- Reviewing retirement and succession plans with local medical leaders;
- Reassessing the current locum experience and easing administrative burdens for locums;
- Consulting with post-graduate medical education programs to enable work experience in non-urban facilities and increase the number of training positions;
- Partnering with the Rural Health Professions Action Plan (RhPAP) to support healthcare professionals who are new to rural communities;
- Engaging third party recruitment firms to target particular specialties and locations;
- Increasing collaboration between Zones; and
- Exploring flexible roles, increased scope of practice and alternate models for care within AHS.

We continue to work hard to recruit physicians for many sites and communities, and some progress is being realized. Recently in Lethbridge 17 physicians have accepted Family Medicine positions, with anticipated start dates staggered between mid-September and the end of February 2023.

We remain committed to supporting recruitment and retention efforts to ensure we are there for our patients and families when they need us the most.

Career Opportunities

Practice opportunities across a broad range of specialties are available. All vacant AHS physician practice opportunities are posted on our physician recruitment website, [Doctor Jobs Alberta](#).

Scientific Advisory Group Update

While the volume and urgency of questions has reduced substantially over the course of the past year, the Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) is still working on COVID-19-related questions as they come. They are currently in the preparation phase for two reviews: one on harmonizing guidelines for respiratory viruses, and one on the prevalence of Long COVID in Alberta. You can find the published reviews on COVID-19 topics on the AHS website: [COVID-19 Scientific Advisory Group COVID-19 Recommendations](#).

In addition, SAG is in the process of becoming a permanent AHS advisory group, with a new name (TBD) and broader mandate. SAG 2.0 will report to the AHS Clinical Operations Executive Committee and can take questions on any topic, as long as the question is an AHS priority and requires the multidisciplinary lens that SAG offers. If you are interested in a leadership role with SAG 2.0, the [expression of interest for the Co-Chair positions is now posted on Doctor Jobs Alberta](#). This is an exciting transition and we are looking forward to the next phase of SAG.

Royal Alexandra Hospital Medicine Conference

You are invited to join the Seventh Annual Royal Alexandra Hospital Medicine Conference on Sept. 24 and 25, a virtual event occurring over two half-days. This year's conference covers topics like long COVID in Alberta, management of heart failure, dermatologic emergencies, palliative care referral, and other topics. For more information, and to register, visit [rahospmedconference.ca](#).

Join Social Innovation for Public Health on Oct. 11

Are you a health or social science researcher interested in advancing your understanding of social innovation? On Oct. 11, the O'Brien Institute will explore the topic of social innovation in the framework of public health. [Learn more](#).

Registration now open for Annual Feldman Lecture

The Grey Nuns Community Hospital Psychiatry Department is inviting AHS Medical Staff to join them for the 37th Annual Feldman Lecture, a virtual event taking place Nov. 4. The event will feature Professor Mark Edwards, an internationally-known researcher and speaker on Functional Neurological Disorder. [Learn more](#).

AHS Priorities

This message includes updates on the progress AHS is making on its [10 priority areas](#):

- Alberta Surgical Initiative
- Continuing Care
- Digital Health Evolution & Innovation
- EMS 10-Point Plan
- Mental Health & Addiction Recovery
- Public Health & Pandemic Response and Recovery
- Quality & Patient Outcomes
- Rural Initiatives & Engagement

- Sustainability
- 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.

Rural Engagement and Initiatives

This work is designed to strengthen partnerships with rural communities, to enhance and better support the rural healthcare workforce, and to better meet the unique needs of Albertans living in non-urban communities.

Minister, AHS leaders tour continues

AHS leadership continues to join Health Minister Jason Copping at a series of engagement events this month and into October. In each community, events are being hosted for internal and community stakeholders who discuss three key questions:

- What is the healthcare system doing well?
- What are the current challenges within the healthcare system?
- What opportunities exist to address challenges?

Events were held this month in Bassano, Cardston, Claresholm, Stettler, Rimbey and Olds. Additional sessions are being held in Calgary, Airdrie, Red Deer, Edmonton, Canmore and Camrose.

A key takeaway from all the events to date has been appreciation for the staff at AHS facilities. Internal stakeholders praise their colleagues for their dedication, and community stakeholders consistently speak of the excellent care they receive when in an AHS facility, or accessing an AHS program or service.

All participants continue to raise shortages of physicians and front-line caregivers as a key challenge impacting service delivery.

Overall, about 700 Albertans have participated in engagement sessions to date.

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 98 per cent of our pre-pandemic surgical volumes. The surgical wait list for adults sits at approximately 73,550, compared with about 68,000 in February 2020, before the pandemic.

Approximately 111,000 surgeries have been completed in the 2022/23 fiscal year.

Surgical wait-list management project

AHS continues to conduct a surgical wait-list validation project across the province. Through September, patients listed for surgery will receive a phone call, voicemail or automated call from the AHS surgery wait-list management team.

As part of the process to confirm wait-list status, patients will be asked for their provincial personal health number and birthdate to confirm their identity. Patients who hang up or do not call the number back will not see their position on the wait-list affected.

AHS will never ask for financial information or for any personal information other than the patient's provincial personal health number or birthdate during these automated calls.

To help patients determine that the call is not a scam, a [webpage](#) has been created outlining the scripts being used for each zone. If patients have further questions about their surgery, they are encouraged to contact their surgeon's office.

Priority: Quality and Patient Outcomes

The Quality and Patient Outcomes initiative is focused on continually improving the quality and safety of the care delivered by AHS and enhancing AHS' organizational culture of learning to improve health outcomes and the experiences of patients and families.

Simulation helps staff hone life-saving skills

Whether in a technologically advanced lab, or through the use of mannequins for a safe learning experience, AHS uses simulation to support staff and deliver superior care for Albertans.

When people think of simulation, they often think of fast-paced, high-stress environments. While simulation is valuable in these scenarios, it's equally helpful in many areas beyond emergency procedures. This reality is reflected across the province by the many teams who support simulation-based education for AHS staff. Learn more about simulation at AHS [here](#).

Simulation Success: Hands-on Practice Builds Skills and Confidence

Critical Care Simulation Lab at Stollery Children's Hospital boosts care through education. Learn more [here](#).

Celebrate PFCC Week Oct. 3 to 7

[Patient- and Family-Centred Care](#) (PFCC) is person-focused, collaborative, and each of us has a role to play. PFCC Week kicks off Oct. 3 and we invite you to celebrate partnerships with patients, clients, residents and their families as we continue to advance our Patient First Strategy.

Learn about the [PFCC events](#) happening across the province, [get inspired](#) through stories of PFCC in action, and [register](#) for the keynote webinar on Oct. 3 at noon.

In the keynote, [Bev Johnson](#), President and CEO of the Institute for Patient- and Family-Centred Care, will discuss the essential lessons we've learned during the pandemic and identify opportunities to move forward.

With her knowledge and experience with healthcare systems from around the world, Johnson will share emerging best practices for building effective partnerships, and shed light on strategies that can help us to support AHS colleagues, patients and families in healing, rebuilding trust and working together.

Register [today](#).

Submit Your i4 Launchpad Pitch by Sept. 30

This year's [i4 Conference](#) is on the horizon and with it comes the opportunity to be part of the event's Launchpad competition.

Launchpad supports outstanding innovations aimed at tackling challenges within healthcare, helping new ideas reach a wider audience. This virtual event will showcase the top submissions from each category and will award finalists with mentorship, exposure and grant money. This year, i4 is exploring the future of health and care, untangling historical assumptions from the needs of a modern population.

For more information, visit [i4 Launchpad](#).

Dr. Richard Lewanczuk Receives Platinum Jubilee Medal

Congratulations to Dr. Richard Lewanczuk, Senior Medical Director, Health System Integration, who was recently awarded her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's [Platinum Jubilee Medal](#).

The medals recognize citizens who have dedicated themselves to improving their communities and our province. Dr. Lewanczuk received this honour for his work incorporating the medical needs of seniors with their social needs, as well as his collaborative work with senior-serving agencies in achieving this.

The Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Medal mark the 70th anniversary of her Majesty's accession to the throne and her unwavering public service to Alberta and Canada.

Congratulations to Dr. Lewanczuk!

COVID-19 Updates

COVID-19 Case Status in Alberta

Hospitalizations and ICU Update

- On Sept. 19, 843 individuals were in non-ICU hospital beds with COVID-19, compared to 799 individuals on Sept. 5, a 5.5 per cent increase.
- Also on Sept. 19, 26 individuals were in ICU hospital beds with COVID-19, compared to 20 on Sept. 5, a 30 per cent increase.

Variants of Concern

Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) continues to closely monitor SARS-CoV-2 variants. From Sept. 13 to 19, an average of 60 per cent of positive samples were strain-typed. Of those, the seven-day rolling average was two per cent Omicron BA.2 lineage, four per cent Omicron BA.4 lineage, and 94 per cent Omicron BA.5 lineage.

As global data is updated, sub-lineage designations are refined that might 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 they cause more severe disease than other Omicron lineages.

Wastewater Surveillance

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

Eight sites — Lethbridge, Taber, Banff, Canmore, Red Deer & Area, Alberta Capital Region, Edson and Cold Lake — reported abnormally large increases (more than 300 per cent) compared to the weekly average two weeks ago. More time is needed to determine if this is a sustained increase.

The other 12 sites decreased or had no significant changes.

Frequency of reporting updates varies by sampling site. The above interpretations were made from available data as of Sept. 22 at 8 a.m. 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 Sept. 19, 4,872 individuals have passed away from COVID-19, including 40 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 Sept. 19, 29,996 individuals have been hospitalized with COVID-19 in Alberta.
- From Sept. 4 to 17, 13,437 COVID-19 tests were completed, a 14-day average of 960 tests per day. During this period, the daily percent positivity ranged from 13.4 per cent to 21.3 per cent.

AHS Continuous Masking Directive Updated

The [AHS continuous making directive](#) has been updated. Unless providing direct patient care, AHS staff attending an AHS-related activity or event on a non-AHS site are encouraged to use their own discretion with regards to continuous masking while following the rules of the individual venue or location.

Interim CEO Video Message: Spotlight on Environmental Public Health

We're so impressed by all our teams have accomplished over the past few years, taking on new work and facing new challenges. Today, we'd like to highlight the work of our Environmental Public Health (EPH) team – or maybe as they are better known, our public health inspectors.

Our 270 inspectors across Alberta have faced tremendous challenges during COVID-19, helping communities and businesses pivot with the changing dynamics of the pandemic. But through it all, keeping Albertans safe in their communities was, and always is, their top priority.

They are critical in safeguarding Albertans from environmental hazards such as foodborne-illnesses, unsafe drinking water and unsafe housing — issues that can cause illness, disease and/or injury. They also ensure compliance with regulations on recreational water, smoke-free facilities, indoor air quality and more, and provide education on various environmental public health topics.

Joining the [AHS Vlog](#) to tell us more about their role and how they help support our people and Albertans are:

- Janine Legare, public health inspector with Healthy Physical Environments
- France Villanueva, a rural public health inspector in Hinton, Alberta

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

Vice President, Quality, and Chief Medical Officer

Dr. Laura McDougall

Senior Medical Officer of Health



Healthy Albertans.
Healthy Communities.
Together.