



Message from Dr. Verna Yiu & Dr. Laura McDougall

AHS Update: Active case numbers level off but ICU admissions at record high, Albertans book in big numbers as immunization eligibility expands

Please print and share with your teams as needed

Dear staff, physicians and volunteers,

Today's Update

- **COVID-19 Cases in Alberta**
- **COVID-19 Immunization Update**
- **COVID-19 Testing for Healthcare Workers — The Latest Numbers**
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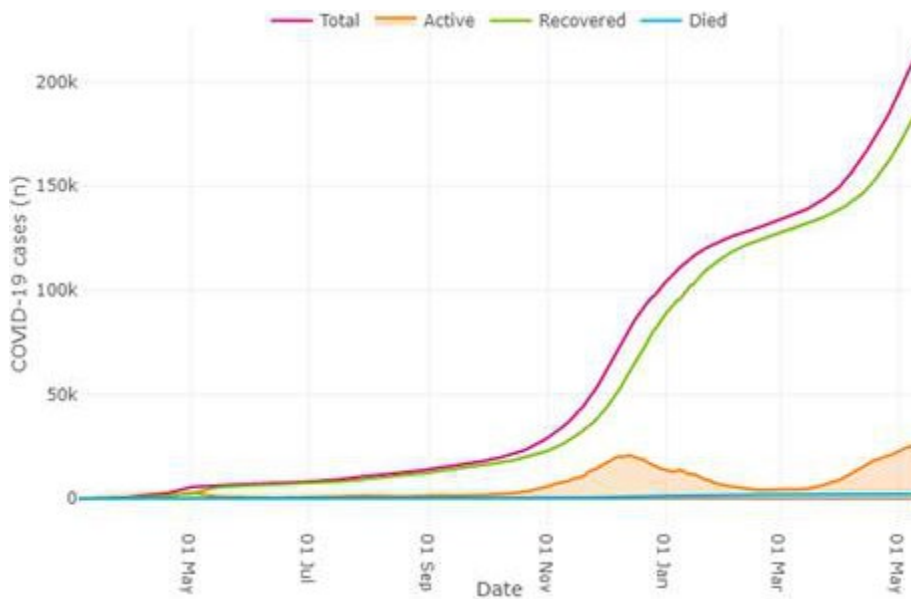
COVID-19 Status

Despite the growth rate of COVID-19 cases levelling off this past week, new records were set for active cases and individuals needing ICU care.

Alberta reported a record of 25,283 active cases of COVID-19 on May 9. However, by May 12, that number had dropped to 24,586, which is still an increase of 0.8 per cent compared to May 5. Some good news: active case counts decreased in three of AHS' five zones. Calgary Zone reported the most active cases for the 18th week in a row, as well as the largest week-to-week increase, while AHS South Zone reported the largest percentage decrease in active cases, as you can see in the table below:

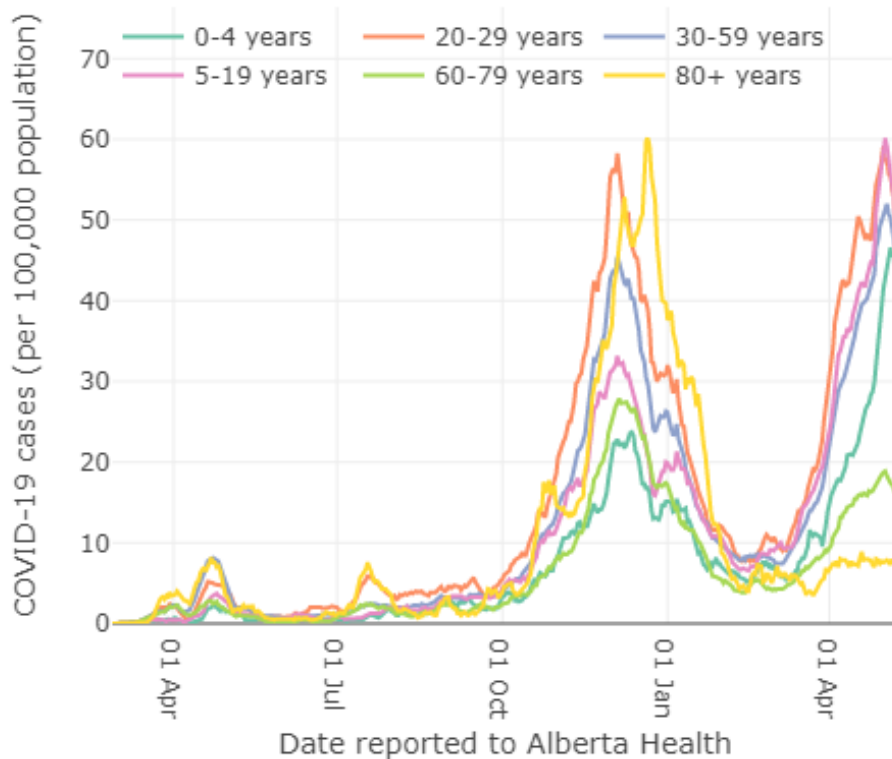
| | Active Cases (as of May 12) | Active Cases (as of May 5) | Per cent Change |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| Calgary | 11,584 | 10,639 | +8.9% |
| Edmonton | 5,470 | 5,979 | -8.5% |
| North | 3,618 | 3,616 | +0.1% |
| South | 1,255 | 1,321 | -5.0% |
| Central | 2,647 | 2,899 | -8.7% |
| Unknown | 12 | 43 | -72.1% |

This week Alberta also reported a decrease in the average number of daily new cases: 1,744 for the seven-day period ending on May 12, compared to 2,064 cases the previous week (April 29 to May 5), a 15.5 per cent decrease. Calgary Zone had the highest total number of new cases this week with 5,812, an average of 830 daily cases and an 11.2 per cent decrease from the previous week (when 6,544 new cases were reported between April 29 and May 5). South Zone reported the biggest decline in new cases this week, going from 762 new cases between April 29 to May 5, to 562 this past week, a 27.2 per cent decrease.



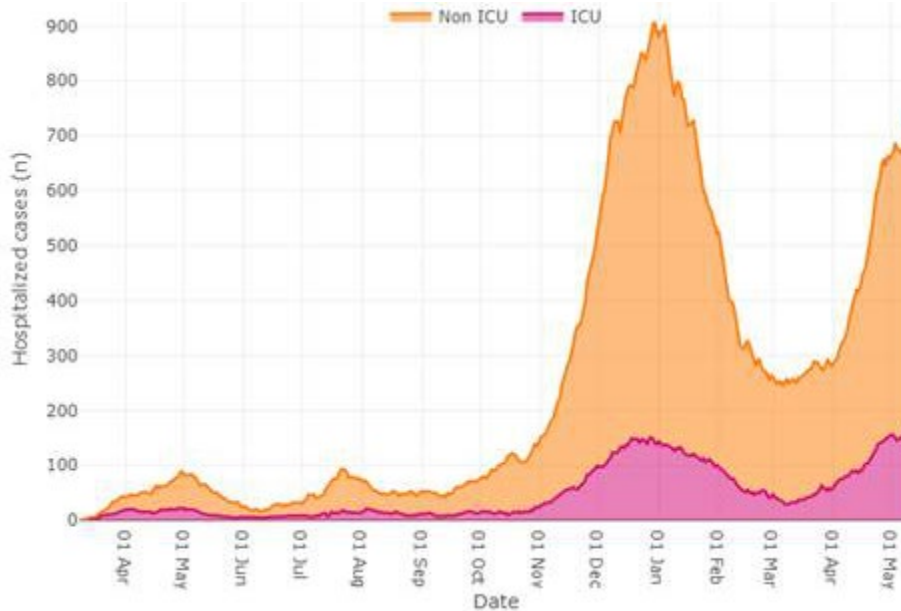
Cases by age group

On May 9, the seven-day rolling average among school-aged children (5-19 years) was 47.29 cases per 100,000 people, compared to 60.14 cases per 100,000 people reported on May 2. Individuals aged 20-29 had the highest rate: 49.14 cases per 100,000. The rate for people 80+ years and those aged 60-79 years, was 7.14 and 15.57 cases per 100,000 people, respectively. A visual representation of these trends in cases in Alberta by age group is provided in the figure below.



Hospitalizations and ICU admissions

For the third consecutive week, Alberta set a new record for individuals being treated in intensive care units (ICUs) for COVID-19. As of May 12, 177 individuals are in ICUs compared to 148 on May 5, a 19.6 per cent increase. A total of 545 individuals were in non-ICU hospital beds on May 12 compared to 527 individuals in non-ICU hospital beds on May 5, a 3.4 per cent increase.



The breakdown of hospitalizations by zone as of May 12 is as follows:

| | Hospitalizations | ICUs |
|-----------------|------------------|------|
| Calgary | 263 | 61 |
| Edmonton | 255 | 77 |
| North | 95 | 16 |
| Central | 68 | 11 |
| South | 41 | 12 |

Variants of concern

For the seven-day period ending May 12:

- 84.5 per cent of total samples successfully screened was the B.1.1.7 (UK) variant.
- 4.6 per cent of total samples successfully screened was the P.1 (Brazil) variant.
- 0.1 per cent of total samples successfully screened was the B.1.351 (SA) variant.

The remaining percentage of total samples successfully screened are either a presumptive variant, a presumptive variant of interest, or not a variant.

Other notable COVID-19-related information

- As of May 12, a total of 215,193 cases of COVID-19 have been detected in Alberta and a total of 8,680 individuals have been hospitalized, which amounts to 4.0 individuals for every 100 cases. In all, 188,475 Albertans have recovered from COVID-19.
- As of May 12, 2,132 individuals have passed away from COVID-19, including 30 deaths over the seven-day period from May 6 to 12. We extend our condolences to the families of these individuals, and to all who have lost loved ones from any cause during this time.
- From May 6 to May 12, 111,834 COVID-19 tests were completed, an average of 15,976 tests per day. During this period, the daily positivity ranged from 10.33 per cent to 12.78 per cent. As of May 12, a total of 4.37 million tests have been conducted and 2.1 million individuals have been tested.
- The R value, also known as the reproduction number, describes the ability of a disease to spread. It tells us the average number of people that someone with COVID-19 will infect. An R value of 1 means an infected person will infect one other person on average. Values below 1 mean transmission is decreasing; above 1, transmission is increasing. The provincewide R value from May 3 to May 9 was 1.00 compared to 1.12 the previous week. R values vary by zone. Calgary Zone reported an R value of 1.06, Edmonton Zone an R value of 0.96, and the rest of Alberta an R value of 0.94.
- For the winter school term, as of May 12, AHS has confirmed 8,617 individuals with COVID-19 were present at schools while infectious or acquired the disease in the school setting. A total of 1,344 out of 2,415 schools (55.7 per cent) in the province have reported an individual has attended their school while infectious or had in-school transmission.

Things You Need to Know

COVID-19 Immunization Update

By the Numbers

As of 8 a.m. today (May 14), more than two million total doses of COVID-19 vaccine have been administered in Alberta. More than 1,356,000 Albertans have received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine and more than 312,500 have received both Dose 1 and Dose 2.



2 MILLION
doses administered

Another record-setting day with the launch of 12-and-up bookings

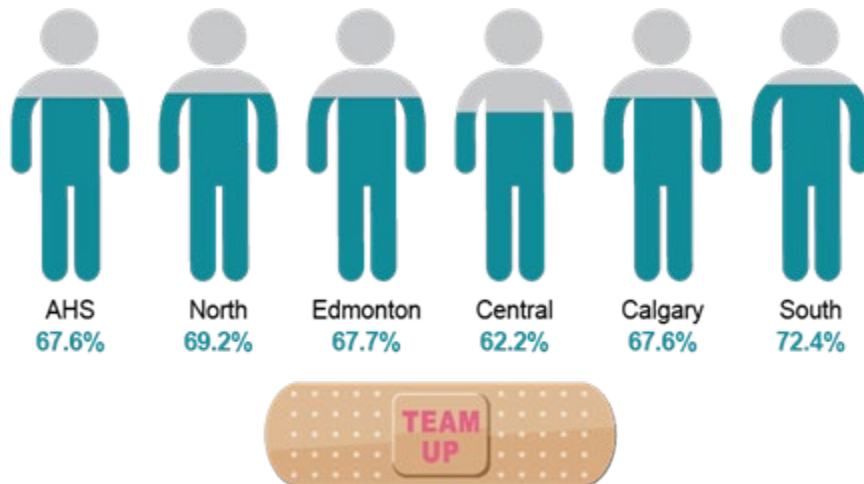
Congratulations to everyone on another record setting day, with more than 157,000 appointments booked on Monday, May 10, when all Albertans ages 12+ became eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine. Good job, everyone!



Reminder to book your first-dose immunization appointment

We want to remind those who have not booked their first-dose appointment to do so as soon as possible. The sooner Albertans get immunized, the sooner we can get back to a normal way of life. Visit ahs.ca/covidvaccine to book your first-dose appointment at a participating pharmacy or AHS clinic.

We strongly encourage all healthcare workers to get the vaccine. The vaccine is important to help protect ourselves, our patients and our communities against COVID-19. Our goal is to have all healthcare workers immunized. The graph below shows the latest staff immunization rates per zone.



These numbers reflect the percentage of all AHS employees (eligible and non-eligible) who have had at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine at an AHS immunization clinic. Staff immunized at pharmacies or physicians' offices are not included in these rates.

For more information, visit [Insite](#). Thank you to everyone who has booked their appointment or has been immunized.

Update on AstraZeneca

On Monday, May 11, the Government of Alberta announced that Alberta is holding the remaining supply of AstraZeneca for those who have a contraindication to an mRNA vaccine, and for second doses, recognizing that some Albertans will need a second dose beginning in early June.

All new first-dose appointments, unless there is a contraindication, are being booked with the mRNA vaccines, Pfizer and Moderna.

This means, based on current vaccine supply, Albertans are not currently able to choose which vaccine they receive at an immunization appointment unless they have a contraindication to an mRNA vaccine.

It is important for Albertans to know both Moderna and Pfizer are safe, effective products that provide protection from the COVID-19 virus, and will help make symptoms less severe for those who do contract the virus.

Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are about 95 per cent effective in preventing COVID-19 disease, and they also protect against severe COVID-19 illness, risk of hospitalization and death. These vaccines have similar side effects, with the most common being pain at the injection site, tiredness or headache.

We encourage anyone with a contraindication or allergy to a vaccine ingredient to speak with their healthcare provider before receiving the COVID-19 vaccine.

COVID-19 Testing for Healthcare Workers — The Latest Numbers

We continue to update the testing data for healthcare workers in the [AHS Healthcare Worker COVID-19 Testing dashboard](#). These statistics provide the total number 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.

As of May 11:

- 76,825 employees (AHS and APL combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 5,527 (or 7.2 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 3,297 employees who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, 540 (or 16.4 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 2,230 employees who have tested positive are still under investigation as to the source of infection.
- 5,310 physicians (AHS and APL combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 235 (or 4.4 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 146 physicians who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, 18 (or 12.3 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 89 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](#) and [dashboard](#).

New Masking Restrictions Announced

Effective May 13, any Albertan seeking a medical exemption from mask use due to a verified health condition must have an exemption letter from a physician, nurse practitioner or psychologist.

Masks are a critical public health measure and only certain health conditions exempt Albertans from wearing a mask in indoor, public settings, including:

- Sensory processing disorders
- Developmental delay
- Cognitive impairment
- Mental illnesses including:
 - Anxiety disorders
 - Psychotic disorders
 - Dissociative identity disorder
 - Depressive disorders
- Facial trauma or recent oral maxillofacial surgery
- Contact dermatitis or allergic reactions to mask components

- Clinically significant acute respiratory distress

Physicians are asked to use Alberta Health's templated letter if their clinical judgement indicates a patient meets this criteria. For more information and templates, please see the [College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta webpage](#).

Verna's Weekly Video Message – COVID-19 Immunization Awareness Campaign

Getting immunized is crucial to making our workplaces safe and healthy for our patients and each other. We know vaccination is one of the most effective ways to protect our health and we strongly encourage everyone to get the vaccine once they are eligible to receive it.

We recognize different people have different feelings and concerns about COVID-19 immunization — and that's OK. But it's important we have the same information. We need to support each other through this process to learn as much as we can to make an informed choice about getting vaccinated.

Joining me (Verna) this week to [talk about vaccine hesitancy](#) are:

- Dr. Kristin Klein, Medical Officer of Health, Provincial Population and Public Health.
- Dr. Lynora Saxinger, Physician and Medical Lead, AHS Antimicrobial Stewardship, North, and co-chair of the Scientific Advisory Group.
- Dr. Stephen Tsekrekos, Medical Director, Workplace Health and Safety.

By continuing to build trust, encouraging each other to find fact-based information and having ongoing conversations with each other about COVID-19 immunization, we can maintain a work environment that promotes worker and patient safety.

Through our Stick with the Facts. Stick Together campaign, we can create a safe space to support staff and patients who may have questions about COVID-19 immunization. Check out insite.ahs.ca/sticktogether to find out how you can get involved with the campaign.



On a related note....

Mental Wellness Moment — Dealing with COVID-19 Conflict

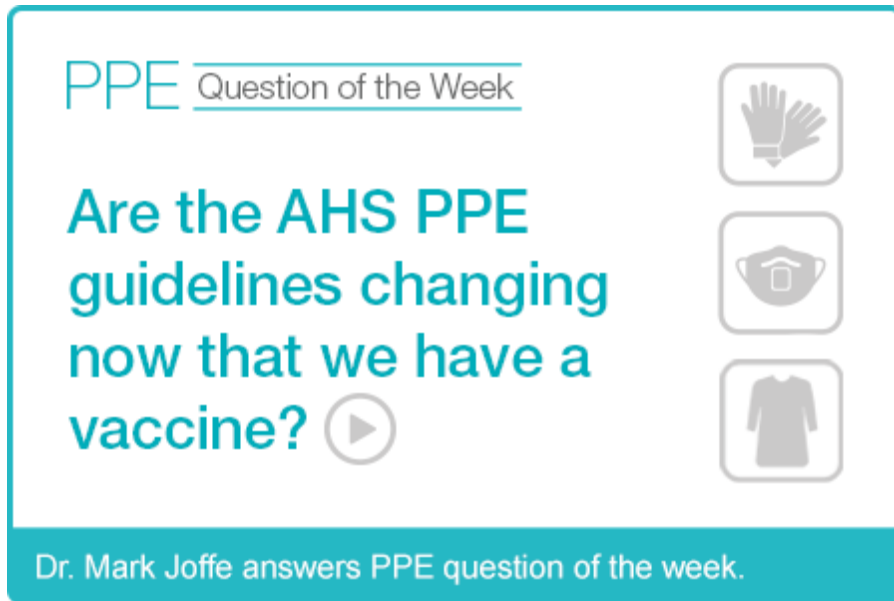
Within families and friendships, as well as online, there is robust debate about many aspects of the pandemic, especially related to public health measures and COVID-19 vaccines. In the latest [Mental Wellness Moment](#), Dr. Nicholas Mitchell — Provincial Medical Director for Addiction and Mental Health — provides advice on how to engage in such debates without escalating into heated conflicts that could damage relationships or your own mental health.



PPE Question of the Week — Are PPE Guidelines Changing Now That We Have a Vaccine?

In the latest [PPE Question of the Week video](#), Dr. Mark Joffe — Chair of the AHS PPE

Task Force — reminds everyone about the importance of continuing to follow PPE guidelines and ensuring meticulous hand hygiene occurs with every patient encounter, even as COVID-19 immunizations roll out.



The PPE Task Force has also created a signage campaign to boost proper PPE adherence. You can order the signage package for your site at no cost. To order, site leaders can visit the [DATA Communications Management website](#) and enter the username AHSSigns and password signs2019. Click on 'Catalogue' and scroll down on the left side of the page to find 'PPE Make Your First Step.' (order #1203694).

Previous videos in the PPE Question of the Week series are available on the PPE webpage at ahs.ca/covidppe.

AHS Teams Step Up During, Following Fire at Seniors Complex

On the evening of Thursday, May 6, emergency crews responded to a massive fire at the Citadel Mews West seniors' complex in St. Albert. In total, 38 designated supportive living (DSL) residents were evacuated, along with all residents of the independent living area of the building. In addition, 129 long-term care (LTC) residents from Citadel Care Centre, a neighbouring building in this campus, were evacuated. Given the size and intensity of the fire, it is a true testament to the efforts of emergency crews that everyone was safely evacuated and only three patients required additional care in hospital.

As always, our AHS team members stepped up in extraordinary ways to support those affected by this event. Members of our protective services team not only helped with traffic control and restricting access, but some of them also worked with the fire department and RCMP to physically enter the building and assist with evacuating 60 residents and supplies that were critical to them. We are humbled by their efforts in the face of such danger.

AHS EMS crews were on site to transport patients and to provide care to the residents who were taken to a hotel as part of the initial evacuation efforts. EMS worked alongside St. Albert Fire, Morinville Fire, Strathcona Fire, Edmonton Fire Rescue, Spruce Grove Fire, the RCMP, St. Albert Transit and Edmonton Transit to support this emergency response. Thank you to the AHS Emergency and Disaster Management team, the Edmonton Zone Integrated Operations Centre team, RAAPID and zone emergency departments that moved quickly to release units and ensure readiness to respond to this situation as it unfolded.

Starting May 6 and throughout the weekend, Edmonton Zone's continuing care team worked alongside home care nurses, facility/supportive living and transition service teams, and area physicians, as well as the contract operators of the facility, to support those affected. All long-term care residents were relocated May 7 to temporary accommodation in the zone and the majority has now been able to return home to Citadel Care Centre. Designated supportive living clients were temporarily cared for in a local hotel, the St. Albert Inn, while AHS assisted with finding other operators in the zone that could offer permanent residences for the affected clients.

For more than a year, most of our focus has been on the pandemic and keeping Albertans safe from COVID-19. Our response to this fire shows once again how our teams will always show up for our patients and clients. Thank you to each staff member who rose to the occasion and gave everything they had to protect and care for people who were experiencing a horrible ordeal in the middle of a global pandemic.

AHS Teams Receive 2021 Patient Experience Awards

Four initiatives involving Alberta Health Services (AHS) teams received Patient Experience Awards this week from the Health Quality Council of Alberta (HQCA).

This year's recipients:

- The Patient- and Family-Centred Care team at Stollery Children's Hospital in Edmonton was recognized for facilitating conversations with families of medically complex children to understand how they were uniquely impacted by the COVID-19 restrictions and quarantine, leading to the development of a series of virtual caregiver support sessions. This AHS initiative created a virtual community to help families cope and navigate challenges with supportive peers and providers through the pandemic.
- Two adolescent mental health units at Foothills Medical Centre in Calgary were recognized for collaborating with patients, family, staff, and community artists to design and create the Hope Hallway. This project, which you can see in [this video](#), transforms the traditional, institutionalized feel of the hospital to one that is teen-friendly, hopeful, comforting and engaging.
- The Life Medical Clinic and McLeod River Primary Care Network in Whitecourt are working together to reduce the impact of financial strain on

their patients. This is part of an initiative being led by AHS Provincial Population and Public Health in partnership with AHS Provincial Primary Health Care and the Alberta Medical Association. Financial strain is one of the most important risk factors for poor health outcomes. The care team implemented a process to identify patients with financial strain and worked with partners to map local agencies that could provide appropriate supports for each patient.

- The medical assistance in dying (MAID) program at AgeCare provides residents with compassionate end-of-life care in a peaceful and supportive space. During the COVID-19 pandemic, AgeCare worked with the MAID navigation team at AHS to continue to accept transfers for MAID by providing a dedicated space for transfers, ensuring the safety and comfort of all involved.

The Patient Experience Awards were established by the HQCA and its Patient and Family Advisory Committee to recognize and spread knowledge about initiatives that improve the patient's overall experience in accessing and receiving healthcare services.

Congratulations to the teams awarded for their outstanding work, and to everyone at AHS who seeks to advance patient- and family-centred care.

Alberta Physician Wins National Leadership Award

Congratulations to Dr. Neil Gibson for winning the Canadian Society of Physician Leaders (CSPL) [Leadership Award](#). The CSPL presents this award annually to a physician who has made an outstanding contribution to the development and mentorship of medical leaders in the field of health services leadership and management.

Serving for 32 years as a military officer, Dr. Gibson held numerous leadership positions within the Canadian Armed Forces, eventually retiring at the rank of colonel. Dr. Gibson is currently the Associate Dean, Clinical Faculty, at the University of Alberta, and is also a full clinical professor of medicine. His clinical teaching awards indicate the importance he places on preparing the next generation of physicians.

Clinical Trials Day — May 20, 2021

Thursday, May 20, marks international Clinical Trials Day and gives us a chance to reflect on the importance of research in advancing healthcare.

"It's not that much of a stretch to say that almost all improvements in patient care can be traced back to a researcher somewhere testing a promising idea in a clinical trial," says Dr. Kathryn Todd, Vice President, Provincial Clinical Excellence.

"Whether you're getting your COVID-19 vaccine, or undergoing a new treatment for cancer, you can be sure that clinical trials were a central part of their development."

AHS supported nearly 1,400 studies in the past year that were approved by research ethics boards in the province. Of those, more than 200 were related to COVID-19.

Clinical trials run the gamut; they might test a new drug, procedure or device, or behaviours, such as exercise or diet.

One clinical trial underway at the Cross Cancer Institute in Edmonton involves a [new treatment for cancer](#) now available in Alberta called Chimeric Antigen Receptor T-cell therapy, also known as CAR T-cell therapy. It is a type of immunotherapy for people with specific types of leukemia and lymphoma.

To learn more about some of the other research taking place in Alberta, see the most recent [AHS Research and Innovation Annual Report](#).

To find out more about how clinical trials work and how they are supported by AHS visit [albertacancerclinicaltrials.ca](#) and [ahs.ca/participateresearch](#).

To find out more about clinical trials happening in Alberta and how to get involved, visit [bethecure.ca](#).

Be Well - Be Kind

Getting Through Stressful Times

Your continued efforts to help keep our patients and communities safe and healthy at this time are truly appreciated. You may be feeling burnt out, frustrated, lonely or struggling to adjust to [at-home learning with your family](#). Remember that support is always available to help you and your family members.

To support your well-being you can access resources about [Shift Worker Support](#), [Fatigue](#) and [Resilience](#). Confidential support is also available through the [Employee & Family Assistance Program \(EFAP\)](#) at 1-877-273-3134. Other health and wellness resources and supports can be found in the [Resilience, Wellness and Mental Health Resource Guide](#) and on the [Health and Wellness Insite page](#).

Sharing the Love — Thank You, Volunteers

The Wisdom Council would like to take this time to express a heartfelt thank you to all of the dedicated volunteers who give their time in providing countless hours to assist Alberta Health Services. We are grateful and deeply appreciate each and every one of you.

— Casey Eagle Speaker, Chair, Wisdom Council, AHS

— Wally Sinclair, Co-Chair, Wisdom Council, AHS

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. We want to share a few recent messages of gratitude with you — and you can see others on our [Sharing the Love webpage](#).

Thank you to all our volunteer baby cuddlers in the NICU. I know we haven't seen you around in a while due to COVID-19 but we think of you often and miss you. Can't wait for the day we can welcome your smiling faces back.

— Amy

Thank you for risking your health to help us, for being our family when family can't be there, for advocating for us when we cannot, and for caring even though you may barely know us.

— Kate and Malcolm

I have the utmost respect and admiration for nurses who work in all areas of the profession, for the expertise and skill with which they do their jobs, and the care they give to all of their patients. You all make the difference in people's lives, and your humanity makes the world a better place. Thank you for everything you do.

— Anonymous

Wrapping Up — Let's Be Immunization Role Models

Eligibility for the COVID-19 vaccines opened up to all Albertans 12 years of age and older this past Monday — and on that day alone, about 157,000 Albertans booked appointments to get immunized. This was another milestone development in our vaccine rollout efforts as we try to stop the current spike in new and active cases, and move closer to a future that more or less resembles our pre-pandemic lives. But we know eligibility is one thing; immunization is another. This week's vlog (see above) addressed vaccine hesitancy. To end this week, we wish to underscore a point made in the vlog by Workplace Health and Safety Medical Director Dr. Stephen Tsekrekos: that healthcare workers, like you, are seen as role models by many Albertans. So we ask you to know the facts about vaccines and vaccine safety, then use this knowledge, along with your influence, to provide accurate information and encourage eligible but vaccine-hesitant Albertans to book an appointment and get their vaccine as soon as possible. We know you are busy. We know discussions with people who are hesitant or reluctant to get vaccinated can be difficult. But if you are comfortable doing so, please make an effort to reach out to those who might just need some information and/or encouragement to get immunized. By doing so, we can all play in role in saving lives, protecting the health system and, eventually, putting this pandemic behind us. Thank you for this, and for everything you do, each and every day.

With enduring gratitude and appreciation,

Dr. Verna Yiu

AHS President & CEO

Dr. Laura McDougall

Senior Medical Officer of Health

