

Forwarded on behalf of Dr. Janet Kow, PHC Senior Medical Director Acute Care and Amanda Harvey, Corporate Director and St. Paul's Site Co-Lead.

Please share with staff, medical staff, researchers and volunteers and post for those who do not have access to email.



March 16, 2020 – 8:00 PM

The COVID-19 pandemic is an unprecedented challenge in the last 50 years of health care. As we enter a more rapidly growing phase of the epidemic, we need to be prepared to meet the additional demands on our health care system. Today, B.C. Minister of Health Adrian Dix directed health authorities to move all hospitals in the province to Outbreak Response Phase 2. This means we will not be undertaking elective surgeries although every effort will be made to prioritize urgent and emergency cases.

SITUATION UPDATE

- As of March 16 (the most recent Minister Dix and Dr. Bonnie Henry announcement), 30 new cases have been announced in BC for a total of 103 confirmed cases.
- The individuals are in the VCH, Fraser and Interior and Island health regions.
- Total number of fatalities in the province has increased to four. They are all connected to the Lynn Valley Care Centre in North Vancouver.
- Five people have fully recovered from the disease in B.C., while six people are in acute care in hospital.
- Four of the new cases are connected to a dental conference in Vancouver that a person with COVID-19 attended on the weekend of March 6 and which drew about 15,000 attendees.
- Providence has now had two patients who presented at our hospitals and tested positive for COVID-19. They are both now at St. Paul's. Thank you to all staff that have enabled these admissions and are providing excellent care. Thank you to our Emergency Departments and the Virology Lab for enabling prompt testing of staff who may have concerns.
- Due to evidence of spread of COVID-19 at Lion's Gate Hospital, Lion's Gate will only be performing emergency surgeries and cancelling all other non-emergency surgeries as part of preparations to increase inpatient capacity.

- Elective surgeries have been cancelled (All PHC and all other VCH Hospitals). PHC is prioritizing emergent and urgent patients for surgical procedures and cancelling elective surgical procedures.
- PHC will reduce all its ambulatory clinics to emergency patients only over the next three weeks.

[Read the full Government of B.C. full joint statement here](#)

Self-isolation and staff returning from travel update

The Provincial Health Officer (PHO) is asking health care workers who return from travel outside Canada and are not essential to the delivery of patient care to self-isolate at home for 14 days.

To clarify, PHC views all staff as working in health care and each of us as essential to the delivery of exceptional patient care.

However we would much prefer that staff stayed at home and worked from there for two weeks.

If your leader determines that your presence in work is critical to the ongoing operation of the service, then you are able to come back to work but you need to wear a mask.

With this clarity, we ask that all staff members who are returning from travel (unless they have travelled to Hubei Province in China, Italy or Iran in which case they must self-isolate) to discuss with your leader to determine whether you are required to return to work, if it is feasible for you to work from home in self-isolation or if you are required to self-isolate at home.

All staff who have travelled outside of Canada are required to self-monitor daily and use appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when providing care.

If any staff member – clinical or not – develops symptoms, they must immediately put on a mask, finish any essential services and self-isolate. Any staff who develop symptoms should contact the regional medical health officer for Vancouver Coastal at 1-604-527-4893.

Though the request for now is to work remotely whenever possible, please be aware that depending on the nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, you may, at some point, be asked to provide support and assistance to our clinical staff at our sites.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) update

As we enter a more rapidly growing phase of COVID-19, we need to prepare to meet the additional demands for PPE, particularly N95 respirators, surgical and procedure masks and Microsan. At PHC, it is essential we all take steps to maintain our stock.

Due to extreme high demand for PPE throughout the system, we ask all staff and medical staff to:

- Know when to properly use PPE, and when not to use PPE to reduce unnecessary usage.

- Know the [proper sequencing for donning and removing PPE](#) (i.e., staff who have been at the bedside with PPE on, must remove it (gown, mask or respirator, goggles or face shield, gloves, etc.) to walk away).
- It is advised that the only time you can be moving through hallways and non-patient care areas with PPE on is when you are moving with a patient.
- If you need clarity on PPE usage, please speak to your manager or refer to the various online resources (see links below) or contact organizational resources (IPAC, OH&S, etc.).
 - [Donning & Doffing Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\)](#)
 - [How To Don & Doff Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\) - video](#)
 - [How To Remove Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\) - video](#)
 - [Droplet & Contact Sign](#)
 - [VCH Practice Alert - Appropriate use of Procedure Masks and N95 Respirators](#)
 - [Aerosol Generating Medical Procedures \(AGMP\) Best Practice Guideline](#)

All health authorities and health care partners are working hard to ensure adequate PPE supplies are available to ensure sustained protection and safety of staff, patients and residents. Proper usage of PPE by our staff is critical in ensuring we can meet the expected increasing demands.

PHC Greeter Program

We still need greeters to volunteer to fill positions over the next few days at all Providence sites. Greeters ensure that all patients, residents, family members, and visitors, as well as staff and volunteers are reminded to sanitize their hands before entering a hospital and/or long-term care site. Greeters will also remind visitors to not enter the premises if they are unwell and that visiting should be family members only.

If you would like to be a greeter, please email the Quality Performance & Improvement Team at PHCclinicalnonclinicalcovid19@providencehealth.bc.ca and provide your name, your preferred location, available date(s), time, and shifts that you are able to cover. Thank you for considering this request and your support during this time.

New rules for visiting long-term care residents

For everyone's safety, effective immediately we are limiting visitors to one family member per resident and essential visits only. That means compassionate visits and visits to help residents with feeding or mobility

More caution in place to limit larger gatherings¹

The government of BC has issued a new order prohibiting all public gatherings of more than 50 people. This includes indoor and outdoor sporting events, conferences, meetings, religious gatherings and other similar events. Social distancing will help to limit transmission and is critically important at this time. On the recommendation of Dr. Bonnie Henry, casinos are closed until further notice. Education stakeholders are being consulted to determine recommendations for school operations following spring break.

¹ <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020HLTH0086-000499>

Advice for staff who may be stranded abroad²

The Government of Canada cautions Canadians to avoid all non-essential travel outside of Canada. Canadians who are outside of Canada should find out what commercial options are still available to return to Canada and should consider returning to Canada earlier than planned if these options are becoming more limited. You are also advised to sign up with the [Registration of Canadians Abroad](#) service to stay connected with the Government of Canada in case of an emergency abroad or at home. If you are not a Canadian citizen or have permanent residency, please email us at covid-19@providencehealth.bc.ca and we will try to help.

Physicians and health-care workers who return from travel outside of Canada (including the US) and are essential to the delivery of patient care may return to work but must take additional precautions. Guidance provided in this [letter from Dr. Bonnie Henry](#).

Take advantage of virtual health applications

With the closure of some ambulatory clinics, we encourage clinicians to use Virtual Health applications to provide care to clinic patients. The Ministry of Health and Doctors of BC are drafting a coordinated provincial plan that will include privacy and security. In the meantime, clinicians are encouraged to use the tools they already may have. These include:

- **Telephone**
To conserve PHC network bandwidth, consider a telephone conversation with your patient if it's sufficient to provide good patient care.
- **FaceTime**
Available on Apple devices. See current User Guide [here](#).
You need the patient's verbal consent.
Note the patient can access the physician's phone number, even if the "do not show my ID" option is selected.
- **Skype for Business**
See [Conducting Virtual Visits via Skype for Business](#)
Note that Skype for Business is not encrypted.
- **SMS (text messaging)**
Use the 'native' application that comes installed on your phone, not one you've downloaded.
Authenticate the identity of the intended recipient prior to communicating.
Please limit patient identifiers whenever possible.
- **Zoom expected to launch later this week providing another virtual health option.**
Zoom is patient- and provider-friendly and can be used via a web browser, mobile or desktop application.
PHSA will secure Zoom licenses for PHC, VCH, and PHSA clinicians. More information to come.

² <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/latest-travel-health-advice.html>

In the interim, **physicians can use/download the free version of Zoom from the App Store.** (Note that the licensed-version provides more functionality.)

- **Questions about using Virtual Health?** Please see the Q&A [here](#), or contact virtualvisits@providencehealth.bc.ca. We are working towards Service Desk support for Virtual Health.

Canadian Medical Protective Association COVID-19 guidelines

The Canadian Medical Protective Association (CMPA) has reviewed their protection process and provided the following guidance to members:

- The CMPA will continue to provide members with liability protection for medical-legal difficulties arising as a result of care provided in Canada in the context of the COVID-19 efforts.
- The association will generally exercise its discretion to extend assistance to members who provide medical care outside their usual field of practice or who provide care in Canada, but outside their designated province of work.
- During the pandemic, members are not required to inform the CMPA of a change in Type of Work (TOW) or Province of Work (POW) prior to commencing their efforts.
- Physicians will be encouraged to consult with the relevant medical regulators (colleges) to ensure the appropriate licensing approvals are in place related to their province of work and scope of practice.
- We will reinforce the fact that despite the challenging conditions of a pandemic, physicians will be relied on to act professionally on behalf of their patients.
- We will remind members to document their rationale for decisions under crisis situations to assist in the event of medical-legal difficulties.

RETIRED PHYSICIANS

- Physicians who are no longer members but are seeking membership in order to assist with the pandemic response will be able to submit their application online.
- Re-applications will be prioritized with a target processing time of no more than two business days
- They will be registered in Type of Work (TOW) 8 (Humanitarian Category) which represents the lowest fee category.

CMPA membership services and physician advisors are available to provide support throughout the pandemic and can be reached at 1-800-267-6522 Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. ET.

Beware of COVID-19 scams/phishing emails

The sensitive global environment regarding COVID-19 is being used by cybercriminals to tap into fears with phishing emails designed to steal money, snag your personal information and infect computers. Be careful with anything related to COVID-19: emails, attachments, any social media, texts on your phone, etc.

Consider these tips to protect yourself:

- **Pay attention to sender's email address:** If the email address doesn't come from a source that's recognizable to you, then best to avoid the email as it could be a phishing attack.
- **Never enter data that a website shouldn't be asking for:** A site that's open to the public, such as the CDC or WHO, will never ask for your login credentials.
- **Check the URL before you type it in or click a link:** If you hover over the link without clicking on it, you'll see the real address it leads to. If the address is different than the link description, then this is a red flag that the email and link are malicious and shouldn't be clicked.

Accidentally clicked on a link?

If you accidentally clicked on a link and entered your credentials, immediately:

1. Reset your password.
2. Contact the Service Desk at **604-675-4299**.

If you receive a suspicious email, forward the email directly to spam@phsa.ca.

Questions?

If you have questions or concerns, please email COVID-19@providencehealth.bc.ca