

COVID-19 in the Calgary Zone: PCN update #5 – April 8, 2020

Dear colleagues, PCN staff and teams,

This is a big week for primary care. As we move into Stage 2 of the pandemic response, family physicians, the Medical Home and primary care teams have a key role to play in regional efforts to care for patients affected by COVID.

In the Calgary Zone, family physicians, teams and PCNs have a long history of working collaboratively and facing difficult situations side by side. We stand at the threshold of an unprecedented challenge for our healthcare system but are ready to face it in the knowledge that we are truly better together.

On Monday evening, we launched a new [primary care pathway](#) for suspected and confirmed COVID patients. On Tuesday, a [COVID tele-advice line](#) went live. In the coming days, more information will be shared about other supports to help you care for your patients – including step-up and step-down care for more unstable patients. These tools and support strategies are likely to evolve as the system meets the challenge of providing the best possible patient care safely and effectively. Our response plans are all based on the [core principles](#) developed and endorsed by PCN leadership.

In the coming days and weeks, you will have many questions. Sometimes, as evidence and best practice emerges, the answers may change. We don't expect our plans to be perfect but we're striving for very good! While there is no doubt that big challenges are ahead, this is also an opportunity to show what primary care can do to support the response to this pandemic. Thank you for your continued contributions and your commitment to your patients in extremely difficult circumstances.

Your sincerely,



Dr. Michael Spady
Medical Leader, Community Health Services
Calgary Zone



Dr. Ernst Greyvenstein
PCN Physician Lead,
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Video: Primary care in the Calgary Zone

An [edited video](#) of Monday's livestream education event, which attracted more than 1,600 views on YouTube, is now available at specialistlink.ca. The evening's presentations and Q&A included Dr. Rick Ward launching a new [COVID-19 primary care pathway](#) and [tele-advice line](#) for physicians. Sincere thanks to all those who participated live and to our panel – Dr. Ward, Dr. Christine Luelo, Dr. Amanda Berg, Dr. Jia Hu, Dr. Michelle Grinman, Dr. Brandie Walker and Dr. Brian Cornelson. Thanks also to Dr. Oliver David and Dr. Rachel Han, who coordinated our physician Q&A. Our next event will be held Monday, April 20, from 6-8 p.m. Register here: <http://calgaryzonecovid19updateapril20.eventbrite.ca/>
Video: [COVID-19 education event \(April 6\)](#) | [Physician Q&A \(April 6\)](#)
Slides: [Primary Care Pathway](#) | [Downregulating Disregulation](#) | [Protecting patients in the Medical Home](#)

Medical Home Q&A, with Dr. Christine Luelo

Q. Who is being tested and why?

A: Testing in Alberta is being conducted for three reasons: 1) Diagnosis and treatment decisions for patients admitted to hospital at highest risk; 2) Trace of spread in the community (close contacts) and 3) To get accurate information on general community spread to influence the provincial planning. This third pillar is being [targeted at specific groups](#) that are constantly changing, and is best managed through 811 rather than swabbing in community family practice... a reminder that symptomatic doctors can call the physician-only line at 587-284-5302 to arrange swabbing. You must isolate until given further direction. Please inform your PCN of your change of status for workforce planning.

Q: What is the role of family practice in diagnosis?

A: As we move closer to the [expected surge](#) in the next few weeks, many more patients will be presumed positive based on clinical symptoms and will not be swabbed unless they decompensate and need admission. Family doctors can make this diagnosis – very much like we diagnose influenza without swabbing our patients. If in doubt, RTI symptoms are COVID.

Q: How can we manage COVID in the community?

A: Use the new [COVID management pathway](#) to [receive patients back in your care](#), and utilize the Specialist LINK COVID [tele-advice line](#) if you are concerned about your patient. More PCN supports will be unveiled in the coming days and weeks.

Q: Is there a summary of changes to specialty access since the emergence of COVID-19?

A: Please reference the newly updated [specialty access to primary care](#) document.

Q: What are the rules around returning to work/life?

A: Patients who test positive or are presumed positive for COVID-19 no longer require a lab test to confirm they have cleared an infection. [Updated guidelines](#) require them to self-isolate for at least 10 days from when symptoms started and until symptoms have resolved (whichever is longer). Healthcare workers confirmed as infected must also not attend work in any setting for an additional four days.

Q: Any tips around workplace/staff screening?

A: Keep up the amazing virtual work! Consider screening yourself and staff before each day at clinic. [AHS fitness to work questionnaire](#) | [Return to work: Healthcare](#) | [Healthcare worker self-assessment](#)

Q: What's the update on PPE use?

A: [Updated advice](#) from the Medical Officer of Health suggests Albertans wear cloth masks when leaving home, especially when distancing is not as viable. Continue to stress the importance of hand washing and physical distancing. A surgical mask (+/- eye protection) can be considered for all health care workers with strict adherence to proper use, as per memo. Full PPE (mask/shield/gown/gloves) for any patient with ILI/RTI/ COVID symptoms. | [PPE Task Force memo](#)

Q: How can I help support the pandemic response?

A: Connect with your PCN to let them know your status and availability for the primary care response. Consider redeployment in acute care for non-ventilated patients. Please visit [calgarymdcovidresponse.ca](#). Update your CPSA status availability by logging into the [CPSA portal](#).

Links: [AMA webinar: Business viability](#) (April 9, 12-1:30 p.m.) | [Pregnancy/postpartum info for patients](#) | [Well-child memo](#) | [#StayHealthyAB campaign](#) | [AMA virtual care hub](#) | [Patient self-assessment](#)

More information: Physicians can find the most up-to-date info at [ahs.ca/covidphc](#); patients at [ahs.ca/covid](#) (in several different languages). Calgary-area resources are housed via the COVID-19 tab at [specialistlink.ca](#). Please forward any questions or concerns to jake.jennings@calgaryareapcns.ca.