

Pandemic RESPONSE

COVID-19 in the Calgary Zone: PCN update #12 – May 27, 2020

Dear colleagues, PCN staff and teams,

One of the biggest positives to emerge from the Calgary Zone's pandemic response has been the willingness of physicians, staff and PCN teams to learn from and lean on each other in challenging circumstances. This was evident again on Monday during the fifth and final planned webinar of the PCN's COVID-19 series. Viewed by more than 1,400 people, it provided a forum for physicians to discuss how to navigate some of the grey areas between policy and practice that emerged over the past few months.

One of the themes that emerged shortly before the webinar started and remains uppermost in our thoughts today is the government's announcement about changes to personal protective equipment distribution.

Details are still emerging about the implications of this decision and there is limited information about how the process will work. However, safety is paramount and as representatives of primary care, our goal is to understand and limit any potentially negative consequences to physicians, clinics, staff, and patients.

What we know at this time is that clinics will be charged for PPE orders made until Saturday, June 30. Prices are [posted here](#) and your PCN will confirm what supplies are available and whether there are any changes to the ordering process. From Sunday, July 1 onwards, all 'private businesses' are expected to source their own PPE. The Alberta Biz Connect website lists [Rapid Response Platform Canada](#) and [ATB Nexus](#) as possible options.

We understand and acknowledge your questions about PPE availability, as well as business continuity, and share your concerns. We will continue to work behind the scenes and will provide you with the most up to date information as soon as it is available.

Yours sincerely,



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



Dr. Ernst Greyvenstein
PCN Physician Lead,
Calgary Zone

Medical Home Q&A, with Dr. Christine Luelo

Q. Can you clarify what role PCNs play in PPE ordering now that the government has announced that community physicians have to start paying for it?

Please know that as a practising community physician working under fee-for-service billing I am as frustrated about this news as my colleagues. It is never nice to read that community physicians are not being “prioritized.” The announcement has created uncertainty about access to supplies, as well as billing and affordability. The PCN operations teams are well aware of this and are seeking clarity from Alberta Health. Policy documents are in the process of being drafted. Business continuity has always been a pillar of our pandemic work when we have been able to control outcomes. In the short term PCNs will still distribute PPE, even as there is a shift by Alberta Health towards cost recovery. I would urge you to reach out to your local PCN team for details specific to local processes. Physician leadership has been advocating on our behalf at multiple tables. Based on what we know today, beginning shortly, PCNs will no longer play a role in PPE supply chain. [PPE pricing](#) | [Alberta Biz Connect](#) | [PPE guidelines](#) | [Rapid Response Platform](#) | [ATB Nexus](#) | [Non-medical masks](#) | [Business continuity](#)

Q. Will there be a requirement to wear full PPE for the expanded list of symptoms (including pink eye) and if so, how will we meet the need for extra PPE supplies?

Our Calgary Zone medical officer of health has confirmed we should be implementing a continuous masking policy for all health care workers in patient care settings. All patients should wear a mask. Suggest they wear their own (or soon-to-be government supplied) mask to the office for in-person visits. If a patient does not have a mask you can choose to supply them with a medical grade mask from your supply. How you handle that is your decision from a cost recovery perspective (think of liquid nitrogen, for example, in wart treatments), though further clarity is expected on this from government, the AMA and others. For patients with influenza-like-illness symptoms, the patient should be booked for a dedicated room/time in your office. Anyone who is going to have contact with them should be in full PPE. As always, handwashing and appropriate donning and doffing of PPE is critical to safe patient interactions.

Q. What part are PCNs playing in the ‘relaunch’ and what support is available to clinics?

This topic was covered in Monday’s webinar. Please review the [edited video](#) or [slides](#) for information and tips. During the webinar we highlighted not just WHO to see, but also WHEN to see them and HOW to do it safely and according to guidelines. The Calgary Zone PCN operations team is committed to providing iterative help during the relaunch phase – also known as level three evidence. In other words, what do my peers do? We are working towards developing more offerings, such as a less formal community of practice so that you can ask questions in real time. In the meantime, please reach out to your PCN Medical Director. [Relaunch checklist](#) | [AMA webinar: Relaunch plan](#) | [Infographic: The Calgary Zone story](#)

Q. Given that patients’ comfort level with in-person appointments varies, what principles would you suggest applying to in-person visits? Any other tips for preparing our clinic for reopening?

1. Patient autonomy: Patients have a right to choose but they need good information. You need to keep your staff and yourself safe. Consider a virtual visit first to provide that information.
2. Physician autonomy: Not everyone has the same level of comfort with virtual care – if you don’t feel comfortable that a virtual visit has completed an assessment in a safe manner, bring them in for a

face-to-face appointment. Knowing your patient may help guide this and also give you a different level of comfort.

3. System thinking: It's important to think about the needs of individual providers and patients. It's also important to think about the impact on our publicly-funded system, based on what you do.

Other updates

1 COVID-19 primary care pathway updated

The primary care pathway for presumed and confirmed COVID-19-positive patients, which has been downloaded more than 3,000 times since it was created at the start of the pandemic, has been revised. The [updated version](#) adds details about public health's role and processes related to the isolation requirements for COVID-19 patients. It also adds information about options physicians can consider if patients' symptoms persist for more than two weeks. [Updated: COVID-19 primary care pathway](#) | [EMR pathway templates](#) | [Hospital discharge pathway](#) | [COVID-19 tele-advice](#)

2 Medical oncology joins Specialist LINK

Five new medical oncology tele-advice lines are set to be added to Specialist LINK next week. Medical oncology advice and four sub-specialties – breast, gastrointestinal, genitourinary tumour and lung – will be available starting Monday, June 1. All five advice lines are available during regular business hours – Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (not available weekends and statutory holidays). Requesting tele-advice is simple: Visit specialistlink.ca, click on the desired service and enter a direct line or cell phone number. Tele-advice can also be requested by phone by calling 403-910-2551. Please have your Practice ID at hand, as well as the patient's personal health number.

3 Search for pathways, tele-advice ... and you shall find!

To help navigate the rapidly-expanding number of services available via specialistlink.ca a new search tool has been added to the home page. To find out which tele-advice services or pathways are available, users can now type any specialty or group into the search window to get a direct link to the corresponding tele-advice line, access pathway or clinical care pathway available via the website.

4 Upcoming webinars

Reestablishing continuity of care during COVID-19 is the theme of tonight's University of Calgary COVID Corner webinar (Wednesday, May 27, 7-9 p.m.) Handouts and recordings from previous webinars can be found on the [COVID Corner home page](#). Resources from the University of Alberta's COVID-19 series [are here](#). The Alberta Medical Association has an upcoming webinar on the pros and cons of clinical ARPs 101. It is scheduled for Friday, May 29, from 12-1:30 p.m. [Register](#).

5 Thank you for watching

A sincere thank you to the physicians, specialists, clinic and PCN staff who took the time to watch and participate in our five-part COVID-19 & mental health webinar series, which concluded on Monday. The webinars attracted a total of more than 7,600 views. Special thanks to our many excellent speakers and the behind the scenes support crew. [PCN COVID-19 & mental health webinar](#) | Slides: [Mental health](#) | [PCN/clinic relaunch](#) | [Clinical perspectives](#) | [Rural perspectives](#) | [Specialist LINK FAQs](#) | [Physician FAQ](#)