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## Calgary Zone COVID updates – Monday, April 20, 2020

### Calgary Zone webinar

Today, April 20, at 6 p.m., the Calgary Zone will host its live, two-hour webinar, with information on caring for COVID-19 patients and PCN supports. Pre-registration is required to access the webinar link. [Register here.](#)

### PPE update

Healthcare providers have raised concerns about some of the recently distributed PPE, and AHS takes the matter seriously. Specific to the odour from the two new mask models, the smell is the result of the masks being sealed immediately after production to prevent contamination. This past weekend, warehouse staff unpacked the masks to allow the odour to dissipate before distribution. All masks are safe, certified, and meet ATSM Level 1 standards. AHS is also creating a front-line focus group of staff members to advise on new PPE purchases and appropriate use.

### Specialist LINK user guide now available

Specialist LINK has released a new [physician user guide](#) with details on the supports available to Calgary Zone physicians from the non-urgent tele-advice service. Over the last two weeks, Specialist LINK has added 10 new specialties, including a COVID advice line, and the user guide provides more information on what physicians can expect when contacting the lines' specialties.

The [user guide](#) also lists tele-advice tips, such as leaving a direct phone or cell number for a call-back, having the patient's Personal Health Number available, and which primary care pathways are available to consult for particular specialties.

Calls to Specialist LINK are returned within one hour (Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., excluding statutory holidays; chronic pain, child & adolescent psychiatry and geriatric psychiatry until 4 p.m.). The COVID advice line is also available during the weekends, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Physicians can access advice lines, user guide and primary care pathways, including a COVID pathway, at [specialistlink.ca](#).

### Medication update

The AHS COVID-19 Scientific Advisory Group [brief](#) recommends against the use of hydroxychloroquine (HQ) as prophylaxis for COVID-19 outside of clinical trials. There is a lack of established benefits to treating COVID-19 with HQ to counterbalance potential harms, and no existing data on prophylaxis. HQ should be prioritized for patients with chronic rheumatologic conditions, where there is stronger supporting evidence.

### False negatives

In a recent safety incident, a presumed COVID-positive patient was taken out of isolation due to a negative test result. In response, the Scientific Advisory Group's rapid review [report](#) and [brief](#) found false negatives do occur in testing but are infrequent and appear to result from insufficient sample collection. They recommend clinical judgement and multiple lines of evidence be considered when making decisions for patient care and staff protection when there is a high probability of disease.

### Testing milestone

AHS marked a milestone in COVID-19 testing with 100,000 tests completed as of April 19. PCNs are grateful to the leaders and staff at Alberta Precision Labs who have been working around the clock, and to all our member physicians for their dedication during this time.

### Quick Links

#### U of C CME

- *Care of the Pediatric Patient with COVID-19*: Tuesday, April 21 at 7 p.m. [Register here.](#)
- *Care of the Hospitalized Patient with COVID-19*: Wednesday, April 22 at 7 p.m. [Register here.](#)

**Leader Series (webinars)** – The AHS Medical Leader Speaker series: How leaders can support team members who are grieving COVID-19–related losses. Thursday, April 30 at 7 a.m. [Register here.](#)

**AMA Billing Corner** – The AMA updated the [Billing Corner](#) with new information and separated the update into virtual care billing and the March 31 changes.

**Sleep strategies bulletin** – Well Doc Alberta [provides tips](#) on how to combat insomnia and sleep deprivation for physicians.

**PPE poster** – AHS is offering a [poster](#) with guidance for use of modified PPE in vulnerable populations outside of health-care facilities.

**Return to work guide** – AHS has a return-to-work [guide](#) and [information](#) for healthcare workers who have had symptoms, been self-isolating, or been tested.