



# MEDICAL STAFF DIGEST

*A weekly update for medical staff*

September 21, 2021

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## **Clinical guidelines**

### **Guidance regarding valid contraindications and deferrals to COVID-19 vaccination**

To assist with questions from patients on medical contraindications to vaccine, the Provincial Health Officer has recently published [guidance on valid contraindications and deferrals to vaccination](#). **There are very few acceptable medical contraindications to the COVID-19 vaccination.** It may be helpful to share this guidance with your patients so that they understand what constitutes a legitimate medical condition that warrants not getting a Covid-19 vaccine.

## **COVID-19 news and updates**

### **COVID-19 case counts and statements**

Visit the new [COVID-19 surveillance dashboard](#) from the BCCDC, to see graphs, maps, and data showing COVID-19 case rates, test positivity and vaccination coverage by local health area (LHA) and community health service area (CHSA).

As of September 20, **10,678** cases have been reported in the NH region since the beginning of the pandemic.

- Cases currently active: **1,008**
- New cases: **72**
- Currently in hospital: **53**
  - Currently in ICU level care in hospital: **20**
- Deaths in the NH region since the beginning of the pandemic: **169**

For the latest provincial numbers, see the [BC COVID-19 dashboard](#), which is updated Monday-Friday. The dashboard may not work in all browsers; Chrome is suggested.

As well, for a visual comparison of COVID-19 cases in BC by HSDA to other Canadian and global jurisdictions, see the [COVID-19 Epidemiology app](#). It's updated on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

- [BC COVID-19 pandemic update](#) – September 20, 2021
- [BCCDC Situation Report](#) – September 15, 2021

## **COVID-19 Impact Survey on Access to Cardiac Services in British Columbia**

This is an invitation to participate in [an anonymous survey](#) designed to better understand the impact COVID-19 had on the access to Cardiac Services in B.C.

By completing this survey, you will be helping Cardiac Services BC have insight on how practice may have shifted, to what degree COVID-19 remains a barrier to care, to guide recovery and access planning, and to inform future considerations.

The survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete and [the survey link](#) will be active until 4pm Tuesday, September 28th.

We are encouraging participation from a broad range of physicians in Northern Health, and particularly Critical Care, Emergency Medicine and Internal Medicine specialists.

For any question or inquiries, please contact Yaser Ahmed, Regional Lead, Chronic Disease Strategic Initiative, Cardiac and Stroke at ([Yaser.Ahmed@northernhealth.ca](mailto:Yaser.Ahmed@northernhealth.ca)).

## **COVID-19 cases are increasing again: get vaccinated, be vigilant**

Northern Health is currently experiencing a surge in COVID-19 cases across the region, which is putting pressure on health care to respond. [Read the update](#) to learn what to do if you test positive, how to get tested, and how to protect yourself during this surge.

Northern Health thanks our public health case and contact management staff for their work and asks the public for their patience and respect as we work through this challenging time. Please be safe, be calm, and be kind.

Read the full update on the [NH Stories website](#).

More information is available in the [Primary Care Provider FAQ document](#).

## **Town hall for medical staff regarding COVID-19**

In September and early October, there will be a number of Town Hall information sessions available for medical staff to get the latest information and ask questions about the evolving COVID-19 pandemic. For each session, Northern Health's leaders Dr. Jong Kim, the Chief Medical Health Officer, and Tanis Hampe, the new VP of Public Health, will give a brief presentation, then provide an opportunity for medical staff to ask questions or provide comments.

For more information, including topics included in each presentation and how to join the (virtual) meetings, please click into the schedule of events:

- [September 21 \(5-6 pm\)](#)
- [September 27 \(5-6 pm\)](#)
- [October 6 \(5-6 pm\)](#)

These town halls will be recorded. Please contact [physican.education@northernhealth.ca](mailto:physican.education@northernhealth.ca) for access to the latest town hall recording.

## Northern BC community immunization coverage

As of September 15, 2021, the Northern BC population as seen: 360,470 doses administered; 74% of population age 12 and older have received at least one dose (64% are fully immunized with two doses). For more detailed community information, see the [full chart](#).

## Trusted links and resources for COVID-19

- On the NH physician website:
  - [COVID-19 information and resources](#)
- On OurNH:
  - [COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\)](#)
  - [Pandemic Recovery Toolkit](#)
- [BC Centre for Disease Control](#)
- [HealthLink BC COVID-19 page](#)
- [WHO FAQ](#)
- [Health Canada FAQ](#)
- [COVID-19 content in other languages](#)
- WorkSafe BC - [COVID-19 information and resources](#)
- Northern Health Virtual Primary and Community Care Clinic: **1-844-645-7811**
- Northern Health Environmental Health Officer Line: **1-250-565-7322**
- Non-medical info: call 1-888-COVID19 / 1-888-268-4319 7 days, 7:30 am - 8 pm

For current information on restrictions on travel, gatherings and other issues, see the [Provincial Health Officer's COVID-19 webpage](#).

## Overdose prevention and response

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### Benzodiazepines continue to contaminate illicit opioids

Illicit Benzodiazepines or "Benzos" contaminating street drugs continue to circulate in the NH region. Benzodiazepines, or benzos, are a type of medication that "depresses" or slows down your brain activity. When benzos are mixed with opioids (down) there is a higher risk of overdose. People who have overdosed using drugs contaminated with benzos may be difficult to rouse, may remain unconscious and slow to respond to naloxone. Giving naloxone is recommended in case an opioid is also present.

**If you suspect someone is experiencing a benzos-related overdose, it is very important to:**

- Call [9-1-1](#) for help.
- Open airway and give rescue breaths, continue giving breaths if needed
- Give naloxone if you have it, multiple doses might be needed but only give more doses if the person is NOT breathing at least 10 times a minute.

For more information on how to respond to an opioid overdose with benzos, see the Toward the Heart resource: [Benzos with Opioids](#).

More information on this Overdose Alert can be found on the NH website: [Overdose Emergency Information](#).

## Other organizational news

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### **UPDATE: IHA cardiac and patient transfer diversions – Diversion cancelled**

This memo is a follow up to the September 13th memo regarding the activated Interior Health Authority (IHA) Cardiac and Patient Transfer Diversions. Due to increased capacity at Kelowna General Hospital (KGH) alongside decline in the numbers of COVID-19 cases, Interior Health Authority has cancelled the cardiac and patient transfer diversion. As of September 17th, 2021, Northern Health patients can be transferred to KGH as well as other lower mainland tertiary care facilities.

As per the regular post-COVID-19 transfer process, physicians are required to call PTN at 1-866-233-2337 for all patient transfers, including cardiac patients; when a patient transfer is required, PTN will coordinate a physician conference as needed with the suggested tertiary referral centres as well as the other provincial cardiac sites.

### **First Nations Virtual Doctor of the Day program and virtual substance use and psychiatry service**

The First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) created the [First Nations Virtual Doctor of the Day program](#) to make primary health care easily accessible to First Nations people across British Columbia.

If people in BC or their family members do not have access to a doctor, or have lost access because of the COVID-19 pandemic, they can call 1.855.344.3800 to book an appointment with the Virtual Doctor of the Day in their region. This service is available 7 days a week, 8:30am to 4:30pm.

All First Nations people who live in BC are eligible for this service – and so are their family members, even if those family members are not Indigenous. There are no age limits.

The FNHA also has the [Virtual Substance Use and Psychiatry Service](#), which provides individuals with access to specialists in addictions medicine and psychiatry as well as mental health and wellness care coordinators. Patients are referred to this service through the First Nations Doctor of the Day Program.

Please share this information and the below resources with your patients or in your community.

More information:

- [FNHA Doctor of the Day FAQ](#)
- [Instructions for accessing FNHA Doctor of the Day program](#)
- Posters: [A](#), [B](#), [C](#), [D](#), [E](#)

## Rural physician grants available

### Rural Physician Research Grants

The [RCCbc Rural Physician Research Grant program](#) aims to empower rural physician researchers – or new aspiring researchers – to pursue innovative rural research and knowledge translation projects contributing to advancing rural health in BC. Through this project, rural physician researchers will be able to apply for research grants of up to \$10,000 per year to support research activities. To be eligible, applicants must be a BC physician with experience practicing rural medicine and with demonstrable extensive connections to rural communities. The research must be pertaining to health in rural BC.

To apply for this opportunity, please download the application forms from the [website](#) and submit it to [apeltonen@rccbc.ca](mailto:apeltonen@rccbc.ca). The deadline for the next round of submissions is October 31, 2021.

### Rural Global Health Partnership Initiative: For Health Equity at Home and Abroad

The [Rural Global Health Partnership Initiative](#) (RGHPI) is a program which provides funding to support partnerships between rural BC physicians or medical trainees committed to rural service, and underserved communities in BC, Canada, and internationally. The goals of this initiative are to enhance capacity for generalism in rural BC; to foster reciprocal learning in diverse health systems and community contexts; and to demonstrate how global health (local and international) community partnerships can heighten awareness, create innovative solutions to address healthcare challenges, and lead to improved health outcomes, especially for underserved, marginalized, and indigenous populations.

Through this initiative, rural BC physicians and medical trainees (residents and medical students) with a demonstrated interest in rural medicine and global health can apply for funding up to \$10,000 to support global health partnership projects. To apply for this opportunity, please download the [application forms](#) and submit them to [apeltonen@rccbc.ca](mailto:apeltonen@rccbc.ca). The application deadline is October 31, 2021.

## Physician Quality Improvement workshops for fall 2021

The [Physician Quality Improvement](#) (PQI) program has some exciting new [quality improvement workshops](#) coming out this fall.

Workshop	Time	Dates
QI Tools & Data	8:30 am – 4:30 pm	October 21, 2021

Systems Thinking and Navigation	8:30 am – 12:30 pm	October 22, 2021
Organizing your Project	8:30 am – 4:30 pm	November 17, 2021
Leadership in Quality Improvement	TBA	TBA
Working with Patient Partners	TBA	November 30, 2021

For more information or to register please contact: [physicianqi@northernhealth.ca](mailto:physicianqi@northernhealth.ca)

## Breastfeeding Committee for Canada Baby-Friendly Initiative 2021 Virtual Symposium – October 1-7 + additional FREE session October 8, 2021

Registration for the Breastfeeding Committee for Canada (BCC) [Baby-Friendly Initiative \(BFI\) Virtual Symposium](#) is open

### Learning objectives:

- This week-long virtual symposium will be held during National Breastfeeding Week with various sessions that focus on the theme: *Protect, promote, and support breastfeeding and BFI: A shared responsibility*
- Additional FREE session will support learners understanding of the new [BCC BFI Implementation Guideline](#) and monitoring tools

### Dates:

- Symposium October 1-7, 2021 at 10 am-12 pm PST / 1-3 pm EST
- Additional free session Friday, October 8, 2021 @ 10 am-12 pm PST / 1-3 pm EST

### Fees:

- \$135 for BCC members and \$150 for non-members for six sessions (two hours each)
- [Click here to become a BCC member for \\$30](#)

### Registration:

- **Symposium:** Complete [symposium registration form](#)
- **Additional free session:** Complete [additional session registration form](#)

### To learn more:

- See full Symposium details on the [OurNH news article published on September 7, 2021](#)
- Questions? Email Michelle LeDrew at [BFIProjectDirector@bccbfi.com](mailto:BFIProjectDirector@bccbfi.com)

## Northern Health Antimicrobial Mobile Assistant – Firstline (formerly known as Spectrum) now available

The NH Antimicrobial Stewardship Program is pleased to share that Northern Health is now part of the Firstline mobile Health application (formerly known as Spectrum). This means that NH prescribers, pharmacists and nurses will be able to easily and quickly access NH created guidelines and antimicrobial/pathogen information from their mobile devices and computers.

**What is it?**

- Firstline (formerly known as Spectrum) is a mobile app that can be customized to deliver local antimicrobial stewardship and infectious diseases resources within any hospital or health system.

**How do we access?**

- Download the mobile app for free from your app store (available for IOS and android) or access [online](#) from your desktop.

**How do we navigate it?**

- Go to the [NH Antimicrobial Stewardship](#) page for an intro on navigating the application

**Changes to LOINC 34108-1 Outpatient Note MOIS Mapping**

LOINC 34108-1 Outpatient Notes sent from Interior Health (IHA) will now be mapped to the CONSULTS folder in MOIS, as well as appear in the DOCUMENTS folder as a repository. This will match with all other health authorities mapping of this LOINC code to the CONSULTS folder.

Any documents that were not previously mapped to the CONSULTS folder, will be moved to the CONSULTS folder, and also remain in the DOCUMENTS folder.

For more information, please connect with Rachel Anatole at [Rachel.Anatole@northernhealth.ca](mailto:Rachel.Anatole@northernhealth.ca) or 250-640-6148

**The Dr. Charles Jago Awards (adapted for COVID) – Nominees**

To recognize our staff, we introduced an easier, more condensed process where you can nominate your colleagues for the work they are doing by nominating them for a “The Dr. Charles Jago Awards (Adapted for COVID)” recognition award. This recognition allowed for more staff to be highlighted, and a safe way for us to congratulate our staff during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Click the link to read the OurNH highlight on the nominees:

- [Dr. Lovedeep Khara – Nominated for Respect and Collaboration](#)

**NEW Long-term Care/Assisted Living Digest – Issue 28: Information for residents and families**

The long-term care task group is producing updates once a month for residents and families of long-term care homes and assisted living facilities.

[Issue 28](#) of the long-term care and assisted living digest is now available. This issue provides an update on the new Public Health Order re: COVID-19 Vaccination Status Information & Preventive Measures Order, the changes to masking, a reminder about social gatherings, and information on the antipsychotic reduction work happening across some Northern Health facilities.

## COVID-19 Virtual Clinic data

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### Northern Health Virtual Clinic: Data on patient visits

The Northern Health Virtual Clinic supports after hours access to COVID-19 and primary care services for those who cannot easily access these services in their communities. The goal is to connect people to their local primary care home wherever possible.

#### Monday, September 13

- 342 nursing assessments
- 47 primary care provider appointments from Port Clements, Fort Nelson, Dawson Creek, Prince George, Taylor, Quesnel, Charlie Lake, Terrace, Fort St. John, Telkwa, Gitsegukla, Houston, Prince Rupert, Vanderhoof, Tomslake, Gitanmaxx, Chetwynd, Pouce Coupe, Hudson's Hope, and Vanderhoof

#### Tuesday, September 14

- 354 nursing assessments
- 45 primary care provider appointments from Fort Nelson, Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Fraser Lake, Houston, Moberly Lake, Prince George, Quesnel, Smithers, Terrace, Burns Lake, Chetwynd, Kitimat, Moberly Lake, Prince Rupert, and Thornhill

#### Wednesday, September 15

- 333 nursing assessments
- 41 primary care provider appointments from Chetwynd, Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Hazelton, Houston, Prince George, Prince Rupert, Mackenzie, Kitwanga, Terrace, Moberly Lake, Nazko, Quesnel, Telkwa, and Vanderhoof

#### Thursday, September 16

- 281 nursing assessments
- 37 primary care provider appointments from Chetwynd, Fort St. John, Houston, Prince George, Quesnel, Terrace, Dawson Creek, Hudson's Hope, Lake Country, and Smithers

#### Friday, September 17

- 306 nursing assessments
- 47 primary care provider appointments from Burns Lake, Charlie Lake, Chetwynd, Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Houston, Hudson's Hope, Mackenzie, Moberly Lake, Prince George, Taylor, Terrace, Fort Nelson, Granisle, Quesnel, and Thornhill

#### Saturday, September 18

- 292 nursing assessments
- 32 primary care provider appointments from Calgary (AB), Chetwynd, Moricetown, Pouce Coupe, Prince George, Quesnel, Taylor, Telkwa, Terrace, Dawson Creek, Greenville, Mexico, and Fort St. James

#### Sunday, September 19

- 299 nursing assessments

- 30 primary care provider appointments from Dawson Creek, Prince George, Prince Rupert, Quesnel, Smithers, Telkwa, Terrace, Chetwynd, Fort St. John, Thornhill, Burns Lake, and Masset

## **Wellness and more**

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Resources for wellness are available on the [Health and Wellness page](#) of the Physicians Website. For more information on [staff deals](#), the [NH Community Corner](#), and [RAARs](#), visit [OurNH](#).