



MEDICAL STAFF DIGEST

A weekly update for medical staff

May 31, 2022

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Clinical guidelines

COVID-19 Therapeutics and education update

Therapeutics for COVID-19 infection and prevention is a continually evolving field. BC Health Authority leadership groups (BC COVID-19 Therapeutics Committee (BCCTC) and COVID-19 Therapeutics Review and Advisory Working Group (CTRAWG)) are continually updating guidance and recommendations based on the growing evidence as it is available. The [infographic](#) available from BCCDC contains a summary of the latest information. More in depth information regarding treatment of various severities as well as specific agents (e.g. paxlovid and remdesivir) is also available from the [BCCDC](#) and regularly updated as new evidence is available. The BCCTC recently released a [statement regarding the role of remdesivir for management of COVID-19 infection](#).

Paxlovid continues to be the primary agent for consideration in mild-moderate COVID-19 infection. Aron Nenninger, a Northern Health pharmacist with the Provincial Academic Detailing (PAD) group, continues to offer a free educational session on the role of Paxlovid in treating COVID-19 in eligible patients. This 30-60 minute session is typically offered via Zoom to groups or interested individuals. Contact Aron directly at aron.nenninger@northernhealth.ca to book your session.

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 May 26, **30,219** cases have been reported in the NH region since the beginning of the pandemic.

- New cases: **86**
- Currently in hospital: **11**
 - Currently in ICU level care in hospital: **0**
- Deaths in the NH region since the beginning of the pandemic: **346**

For the latest provincial numbers, see the [BC COVID-19 dashboard](#), which is updated every Thursday. 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](#). The following reports are updated every Thursday:

- [BC COVID-19 weekly pandemic updates](#)
- [BCCDC Situation Reports](#)

Trusted links and resources for COVID-19

- On the NH physician website:
 - [COVID-19 information and resources](#)
- OurNH resources:
 - [COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\)](#)
 - [Pandemic Recovery Toolkit](#)
- [Northern Health online booking form – COVID-19 test](#)
- [Northern BC community immunization coverage page](#)
- [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

Benzodiazepines and Opioids in the Illicit Drug Supply

While the vast majority of overdose deaths in BC remain linked to fentanyl, the increasing adulteration of the street opioid supply with benzodiazepines is a growing concern. The concurrent use of benzodiazepines and opioids significantly increases the risk of respiratory depression, overdose, and death.

The detection rate of benzodiazepines in the illicit drug supply rapidly increased from 15% of samples in July 2020 to 52% of samples in January 2022. It has since fallen to 32% in

March 2022. Benzodiazepines are among the top drugs involved in drug toxicity deaths in BC, found in 12.2% of deaths (n=1856) from 2019-2021.

Opioid-benzodiazepine overdoses result in atypical and protracted overdose events that can be difficult to reverse. The symptoms of an acute benzodiazepine overdose are similar to an opioid overdose and may include:

- Sedation and loss of consciousness
- Muscle relaxation and loss of movement control
- Slurred speech
- Blackouts and memory loss

Typically, benzodiazepine involvement is suspected when the person does not regain consciousness following the administration of naloxone. The sedation resulting from overdosing can last several hours or even longer due to the long half-life of benzodiazepines.

Naloxone should always be administered in the event of an overdose as it can reverse the effects of opioid overdose and restore breathing. The use of flumazenil to reverse the effects of benzodiazepines is not recommended.

For more information, please see the following resources:

- [Summary Sheet for Health Professionals: Benzodiazepines found in Opioids in British Columbia](#) (PDF)
- [Etizolam in British Columbia's Illicit Drug Market](#) (PDF)

Other organizational news

Physician and medical staff highlight

The [NH Stories site](#) is a great place to read stories about NH physicians, staff, events, insights, and much more! This month, we are celebrating the [nurse practitioner Christy Demeter](#) and [pharmacist Sydney Saunders](#), who live, work, and play on the traditional territory of the Treaty 8 First Nations in Dawson Creek.

If you have a story to tell, or have a colleague you'd like to spotlight, please reach out to Kim Matheson at kimberly.matheson@northernhealth.ca

Update from the Northern Medical Program

This update was submitted on behalf of Dr. Paul Winwood (Regional Associate Dean Northern BC, UBC and Associate Vice President, Division of Medical Sciences, UNBC).

The NMP class of 2024 transitions to Year Three Clerkship Monday, June 6. This class started medical school in the midst of the pandemic and spent the whole of their first year and some of their second year with mostly virtual learning. The 24 students are excited to start their clerkship and be more engaged with patient care. Northern Medical Program (NMP) staff will be distributing the class composite to UHNBC departments this week. Please join me in welcoming them to the clinical work place at UHNBC next week.

The class of 2023 students officially wrapped up their clerkship year on May 20. They will commence Year Four Elective placements across the Province and within Northern Health starting Monday, July 4. The NMP thanks you for your continued support for NMP students. Our success in Canadian Resident Matching Service (CaRMS) and practice outcome data is a testimony to your commitment to medical education.

Celebrate “What Matters to You?” Day on June 9, 2022!

Asking a simple question and genuinely listening to the answer is the premise of [“What Matters to You?” Day](#), This international movement, which began in Norway in 2014, encourages meaningful conversations between patients and health care providers (in more than 30 countries) by making room to discuss people’s hopes, dreams, goals, and desires. On June 9, let’s celebrate International “What Matters to You?” Day and all the meaningful conversations it helped start!

[Check out some great resources](#) from the BC Patient Safety & Quality Council to inspire and help you to ask “what matters to you?” and [learn more about the ways you can celebrate](#).

Applications open for the New Graduate Transition program! Learn more about the program that supports nurses and allied health professionals

Northern Health’s New Graduate Transition Program (NGTP) supports the first 12 months of transition to practice for both nurses and allied health professionals. More information about this program can be found [on OurNH](#) or via studentpractice@northernhealth.ca.

Suicide Prevention Reminder – Learn more about the Required Organizational Practice and resources available!

Northern Health has clients who are at risk of suicide. Using the tools and resources will help identify clients who are at risk and develop treatment interventions and a safety plan to help prevent suicide.

Tools and Resources

- [Suicide Severity Rating Scale Screener](#)
- [Suicide Screening and Intervention](#)
- [Risk Assessment of Mental Health Observation Unit Clients](#)
- [Learning Hub module Suicide: Facing the Difficult Topic Together – Empowering Physicians and Nurses, Instilling Hope in Patients](#)
- [Suicide Prevention Required Organizational Practices \(ROP\) Poster](#)
- [ROP handbook](#)

One day left! Pick your COVID-19 Recognition gift or donation

If you haven’t picked your [gift package or donation](#) option from the [NH Gift Selection Form](#) as a small token of thanks for the incredible work of NH staff and physicians during the COVID-19 pandemic, please note that **the form closes tomorrow (June 1, 2022)**! In order to choose your gift or donation, please:

1. Go to [the form](#)
2. Fill out or select:
 - Your information (for logistical purposes)
 - Your gift package or donation preference

- Your community*

More information is available on the form.

*Remote workers located outside the NH region should select "Other (please specify)" for their community. These staff will be contacted shortly after the form closes with more information.

Expressions of interest: Physician Quality Improvement & Spread: Physician co-chair position

The Physician Chair has a mentoring role in physician led quality improvement activities associated with the development, management, and evaluation of the Specialist Services Commission's (SSC) [Physician Quality Improvement](#) program and the new Spread initiative within Northern Health. The Physician Chair will communicate with and work with Northern Health leadership to ensure SSC Physician QI and Spread activities are in alignment with operational goals and objectives.

For more information about the role and how to apply, please see the document attached to the email update.

Town hall meetings and CME events for medical staff

Northern Health has been offering town hall meetings to share information about the COVID-19 pandemic, recruitment and retention strategies, to get feedback on upcoming plans and projects, and more! After every presentation, there will be time for questions and comments. There are also many interesting continuing medical education presentations coming up that we will be showcasing.

For more information about upcoming town hall and education events, including topics for each presentation and how to join the (virtual) meetings, please click into the schedule of events:

- [June 15 \(5-6 pm\): Town Hall \(Northern Health is going from paper to digital: What is the plan?\)](#) Speakers: Dr. Dr. Andrew Deonarine (Medical Lead, Informatics), Dr. Dana Cole, (Regional Director, Pharmacy Services; Clinical Lead, Safer Care), and Bjorn Butow (Director, Clinical Information Systems)
- June 16 (12-1 pm): Northern Health Indigenous Health presents: BC First Nations Health Governance Structures (one hour CME)
 - [Join via Zoom](#)

Dates and log-in information for these events will be posted to the [Continuing Medical Education site](#). The town hall events will be recorded.

Please contact physician.education@northernhealth.ca for access to the latest town hall recording.

COVID-19 Virtual Clinic data

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, May 23

- 15 nursing assessments
- 40 primary care provider appointments from Arras, Chetwynd, Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Montney, Prince George, Prince Rupert, Quesnel, Sechelt, Telkwa, Terrace, Thornhill, and Witset

Tuesday, May 24

- 14 nursing assessments
- 60 primary care provider appointments from Burns Lake, Charlie Lake, Chetwynd, Fort St. John, Houston, Kelowna, Kitwanga, Prince George, Prince Rupert, Quesnel, Smithers, Terrace, and Thornhill

Wednesday, May 25

- 16 nursing assessments
- 70 primary care provider appointments from Charlie Lake, Chetwynd, Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Kitimat, Mackenzie, Nazko, Pouce Coupe, Prince George, Prince Rupert, Smithers, Southbank, Terrace, Thornhill, and Tumbler Ridge

Thursday, May 26

- 19 nursing assessments
- 53 primary care provider appointments from Buick, Burns Lake, Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Houston, Kitimat, Kitwanga, Prince George, Prince Rupert, Quesnel, Smithers, Taylor, Terrace, and Thornhill

Friday, May 27

- 17 nursing assessments
- 71 primary care provider appointments from Burns Lake, Chetwynd, Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Hazelton, Houston, Port Edward, Prince George, Prince Rupert, Quesnel, Smithers, Southbank, Squamish, Terrace, and Wonowon

Saturday, May 28

- 15 nursing assessments
- 40 primary care provider appointments from Burns Lake, Chetwynd, Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Kitimat, Prince George, Prince Rupert, Quesnel, Smithers, and Terrace

Sunday, May 29

- 13 nursing assessments
- 43 primary care provider appointments from Cedarvale, Chetwynd, Dawson Creek, Fort St. John, Goodlow, Groundbirch, Prince George, Prince Rupert, Rose Prairie, Taylor, Terrace, Thornhill, and Victoria

Wellness and more

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](#).