

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

With Vaccines Coming, Family Doctors Could Jab Millions More If Fully Involved

A successful and equitable rollout means getting vaccines in the right arms as quickly as possible

March 23, 2021 (TORONTO) – The Ontario College of Family Physicians (OCFP) is calling for the increased involvement of Ontario’s family doctors in vaccination efforts. The call comes after a recent survey from the OCFP found one-third of Ontarians remain unsure about receiving a COVID-19 vaccine and would be more likely to get vaccinated if it were endorsed and administered by a family doctor.

An overwhelming amount of survey respondents (87%) reported they go to their family doctor first for health advice.

“With the recent government announcement to expand the vaccine rollout, family physicians will continue to step up and support public health in mass vaccination clinics,” said Dr. Liz Muggah, President, Ontario College of Family Physicians. “However, we know that many options beyond pharmacy and mass vaccination sites will be needed to ensure we reach all Ontarians, including those who are vulnerable, hesitant and homebound. We must use the full potential of family physicians and primary care to ensure an efficient and equitable rollout.”

The OCFP’s findings show giving Ontarians the option to get their vaccines from a family doctor could increase vaccine uptake by as much as 61% among people who are resistant or hesitant to getting the vaccine – with the potential to raise the provincial uptake rate by 20 points to 88%. This could reduce vaccine hesitancy in Ontario from 32% to 12% and result in over 2 million more Ontarians signing up to get the shot.

“Family doctors can help boost vaccine confidence. We know our patients best, and we know how to reach those most vulnerable,” said Dr. Tara Kiran, a family physician at St. Michael’s Hospital in Toronto. “An all-hands-on deck approach must include a central role for family doctors in the province’s vaccination plan. Thousands of family doctors in the province are prepared and ready to get to work vaccinating Ontarians.”

The OCFP is encouraged by the success of the in-clinic vaccination pilot program in six regions in Ontario with the AstraZeneca vaccine, where family doctors are vaccinating while still running their practices and delivering ongoing care. All primary care sites are on track to meet the early April vaccination target provided by the Ministry of Health.

“Family doctors are currently vaccinating in mobile and mass clinics, through primary care pilots, and were instrumental in vaccinating long-term care and retirement home residents with Moderna and Pfizer,” added Dr. Muggah. “Now with vaccine supply increasing, and in the public interest, it is imperative that we have options for all Ontarians to be vaccinated, including with the support of family doctors and their use of AstraZeneca and Moderna vaccines.”

- more -

Key Research Findings

- When asked about the ideal location where respondents would want to get the COVID-19 vaccine, 46% said family doctor's offices, 25% said pharmacies, 16% said mobile vaccination clinics and 13% said mass vaccination clinics.
- The top reasons why respondents choose to get their flu shots from family doctors:
 - Their family doctor knows them and their health history (27%).
 - They can talk to their doctor about other health-related issues at the same time (25%).
 - They trust their family doctor to administer a vaccine (24%).
- 68% of Ontarians say they would get the COVID vaccine, 21% said they may get the vaccine, and 11% said they would not.
 - Of the 21% who indicated they may get the vaccine, 79% said they would be more likely to get it if it was endorsed and administered by a family doctor.
 - Of the 11% of Ontarians who indicated they would not get the vaccine, 28% said they would be more likely to get the vaccine if it was endorsed and administered by a family doctor.
- Of those who are either hesitant or resistant to receiving the vaccine (32%), six in 10 (61%) say they would be more likely to get the COVID-19 vaccine if a family doctor assured them the vaccine was safe and effective and that they were the ones administering it.
 - Family doctors lead all other medical professionals in this regard (61%), followed by those who are either a Nurse (50%) or Pharmacist (42%).
- 83% of respondents ranked family doctors as most trusted among a list of other types of healthcare providers.
- 87% of respondents go to their family doctors first when seeking health-related advice for themselves and their families.

About the Survey

The OCFP study released by Maru Public Opinion was conducted by Maru/Blue from February 16 to 19, 2021 among a total 1572 adult 18+ residents of Ontario, with an estimated margin of error of +/- 2.5%, 19 times out of 20. The full results, methodology, and tables can be found at <https://www.marugroup.net/public-opinion-polls/canada>

About the Ontario College of Family Physicians

The OCFP represents more than 15,000 family physicians across the province. OCFP supports our members by providing evidence-based education and professional development, promoting and recognizing leadership excellence in family medicine, and advocating for the vital role family physicians play in delivering the highest quality care to patients and families across Ontario. A not-for-profit and voluntary organization, the OCFP was established in 1954 and is the provincial chapter of the College of Family Physicians of Canada. (www.ontariofamilyphysicians.ca/)

Media Contact

Leslie Greenberg
Director, Member Engagement & Public Affairs
media@ocfp.on.ca

####