

December 14, 2021

73-2021-3401

MEMORANDUM TO: Sarah Hobbs, Alliance for Healthier Communities
Kavita Mehta, Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario
Caroline Lidstone-Jones, Indigenous Primary Health Care Council
Katie Hogue, Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic Association
Kim Moran, Ontario College of Family Physicians
Allan O’Dette, Ontario Medical Association
Dr. Jim Wright, Ontario Medical Association

FROM: Dr. Kieran Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health, Ministry of Health
Alison Blair, Associate Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health
Patrick Dicerri, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health
Dr. Sacha Bhatia, Population Health and Values Based Health
Systems Executive, Ontario Health
Dr. Chris Simpson, Executive Vice-President, Medical, Ontario Health

RE: Focused Vaccination Efforts in response to Omicron Variant

Ontario has one of the highest vaccination rates in the world. The primary care sector has been a key partner in Ontario’s COVID response efforts, including vaccination efforts and the ministry deeply appreciates your efforts to support the health of Ontarians.

Despite this, the Omicron variant is quickly becoming the dominant strain of COVID-19 in Ontario, and cases will continue to sharply increase. Ensuring that all eligible Ontarians are able to receive their vaccinations as quickly as possible is of the utmost importance to reduce the risks of morbidity and mortality from COVID-19 and maintain critical operations in our health care system.

The voice of the primary care provider is trusted and can dispel vaccine misinformation and reduce or eliminate hesitancy. Wherever possible, please use any opportunity to promote vaccination for all eligible groups. To support this push to increase vaccination rates quickly, the ministry is requesting primary care providers and teams, where possible, to prioritize their work to assist in the administration of COVID-19 vaccines such as:

- Maintain essential and critical clinical services
- Defer non-essential clinical services and use this time and staff to support the immunization effort for the next two weeks
- Reach out to your local hospital, health unit, etc to review how you can support the vaccine strategy.

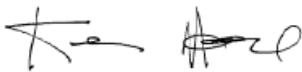
We recognize this pivot requires a reprioritization of the numerous ways primary care is supporting the community, but the current situation requires an extraordinary response by the entire health system.

Public Health Units (PHUs) continue to be responsible for determining the best ways to maximize vaccine throughput locally and will continue to collaborate with and provide vaccines to primary care for those that are able to vaccinate in their offices. Primary care providers and organizations who can play a renewed role in this concerted system-wide effort to maximize vaccination of their eligible patient population, can do so through collaboration with mass clinics run by PHUs/health partners, including hospitals or within their own clinics in partnership with PHUs. Local planning will be supported by Ontario Health's regions, through coordination among hospitals, Ontario Health Teams, primary care and other community agencies where appropriate.

COVaxON is mandatory for primary care providers taking part in the COVID-19 vaccine administration program. PHUs are responsible for setting up each primary care site in COVaxON and providing training and onboarding support to ensure readiness for vaccine administration in collaboration with Ontario MD. PHUs can provide information to access training and onboarding details, where required.

We ask that you share this message with your members and provide them with information to support their vaccination efforts.

Thank you for your assistance in this critical matter. Your ongoing support, commitment and dedication in the fight against the pandemic are greatly appreciated.



Dr. Kieran Moore



Alison Blair



Patrick Dicerni



Dr. Sacha Bhatia



Dr. Chris Simpson

- c: Dr. Catherine Zahn, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health
- Matthew Anderson, President and CEO, Ontario Health
- Tim Lewis, Assistant Deputy Minister, Vaccine Strategy and Performance, Ministry of Health
- Dr. Daniel Warshafsky, Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health, Ministry of Health
- Catherine Dowdall, Executive Director, Negotiations & Implementation, Ontario Medical Association
- Teresa Buchanan, Executive Lead, Physician & Provider Services, Ministry of Health
- Nadia Surani, Director, Primary Health Care Branch, Ministry of Health
- Dr. David Price, Chair, Provincial Primary Care Advisory Table
- Marnie MacKinnon, Director, Vaccine Implementation Branch, Ministry of Health