

COVID Update

**Province-Wide Townhall re: COVID-19 Vaccinations in Long-Term Care (LTC) –
Education for Physicians and NPs**



The hosts of last evening's webinar were the OMA, Public Health and OLTC. Moderator for the panel was Dr. Andrea Moser, Past Chair a of OMA Section LTC/COE. Other panelists were:

- Dr. Benoit Robert, President OLTC and Medical Director of the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Care Centre in Ottawa,
- Dr. Michael Finkelstein, Associate MOH, Toronto Public Health, and Chair, OMA Section of Public Health Physicians, and
- Dr. Daniel Warshafsky, Senior Medical Consultant, Office of CMOH

Dr. Benoit Robert introduced the current two mRNA vaccines. The Moderna vaccine will be distributed over the next few weeks. Further supplies of the Pfizer vaccine are expected in January. Messenger RNA vaccine research was ongoing for years. Dr. Moser added, "it doesn't take ten years to test a vaccine, it takes ten years to develop a vaccine."

Dr. Finkelstein further reviewed the current knowledge of the vaccines and several trials. The countries involved the trials had a significant prevalence of COVID. Trials included the frail elderly. Their immune system is not as strong, but the efficacy is there. The information technology for the post-vaccination surveillance program will be crucial to determine the effectiveness of the vaccines.

Medical Directors, attending physicians and nurse practitioners have a leading role to advocate and educate our staff on receiving the vaccine. Vaccine hesitancy needs to be addressed. Dr. Warshafsky stated that there are no specific guidelines but the Office of CMOH seeks to understand why health care providers may refuse the vaccine. "Where is the knowledge gap?" Dr. Warshafsky added, "I want to be really, really clear" that taking the vaccine doesn't change any current protective measures. Several resources, including a webinar on the development of all the different vaccines are available at the Public Health Ontario web site:

<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/diseases-and-conditions/infectious-diseases/respiratory-diseases/novel-coronavirus/vaccines>

LEADERSHIP, COLLABORATION and COMMUNICATION

The Ontario Long Term Care COVID-19 Commission released two interim reports on October 23 and December 4. The first interim report urged a “collaboration model” to be mandated immediately. The “relationships between LTC homes, local hospitals and public health units must be placed on trust, collaboration and respect on all sides for the expertise all parties bring to the priority of ensuring health, safety and wellbeing go residents.” The second report recommended a “clear need for quality of care amongst the leadership team of the Executive Director, Director of Personal and Nursing Care and Medical Director...”

<http://www.ltccommission-commissionsld.ca>

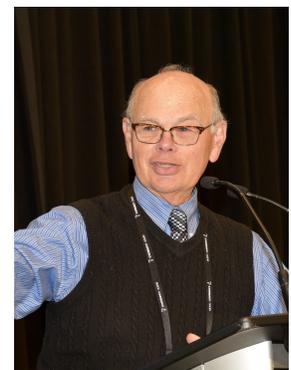


TENDERCARE, Scarborough, is a larger LTC facility with 254 beds. The current number of residents infected is 118 and 47 staff. There are 21 deaths (Dec 23). “Two physicians and the executive director were sick with coronavirus, said an OLTCC social-media message that pleaded for help.” Dr. Kate Greenway responded to this urgent call for assistance. The doctor was greeted by a nurse who had worked extra shifts on the weekend and returned on her day off.

Dr. Greenway saw the sickest residents but there was no time to see those who were not quite as ill. “It’s a nursing home with people who are very ill already with dementia and various other illnesses. It is a very crowded space,” says Greenway. “The rooms are crowded. There is really no way to separate the patients.” The nurses she worked with are very dedicated to the residents, work long hours, trying to do their best.

[Besieged nursing home, TheStar, Dec 22](#)

OAKWOOD PARK MANOR has 153 beds; 97 residents and 91 staff have tested positive. The Medical Director of Oakwood Park Lodge is Dr. Philip McGarry, former Director of OLTCC and recipient of the LTC Physician of the year award in 2014. He describes “a horror movie come true”. Greater than 70% of the staff are away including all administrators and managers. The entry of the virus into the home was from the transfer of a resident back to the home from the hospital. Dr. McGarry describes Oakwood as an older home with dedicated staff. Promises for redevelopment are repeatedly delayed.



Dr. McGarry remains COVID negative and does virtual care. He rounds at other LTC homes, as does his physician wife. COVID infected his colleague at Oakwood, who remains unwell with anosmia and other symptoms. The care of residents is severely strained. There was an acute shortage of oxygen concentrators. Agency staff, who are assigned for support, require more training in IPAC. Community physicians are unable to help because they need to return to their own practice settings. Their nurse practitioner is also infected. Communication “has broken down”. Dr. McGarry learned about support from Niagara Health from the newspaper.

OLTCC grieves the loss of all our residents who have died this past year. Our thoughts go to their families and loved ones. Our gratitude goes to physicians and nurse practitioners who provide care and leadership through the current pandemic crisis.