

COVID-19 REPORT

Two deaths of Ontario LTC residents were reported yesterday. On Monday, March 23, A 90-year-old woman was a resident of Hillside Terraces in Oshawa. She died after being rushed to Lakeridge Health. Yesterday, an 80-year-old woman passed away at St. Joseph's Hospital in Hamilton. She was a resident of Heritage Green Nursing Home in Stoney Creek. She was in isolation since admission to the hospital on March 16.

Yesterday the Ministry of Health released “Enhanced Measures to Protect the Safety of Residents in Long Term Care Homes” that includes deferring or cancelling vacations and sing volunteers to perform work of regular staff. Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health, issued a new directive that restricts resident from leaving the home for sort visits with family and friends. This not only removes the risk of residents introducing COVID-19 into the home but also being taken inappropriately to a clinic or emergency department. Medical Directors need to be aware and provide leadership for these and other directives.

<https://news.ontario.ca/mltc/en/2020/03/ontario-implements-enhanced-measures-to-protect-the-safety-of-residents-in-long-term-care-homes.html>

Based on the experiences in Wuhan and elsewhere, the surge for our hospitals is yet to come. Management of COVID-19 infections, and related influenza-like illness, includes assistance with feeding, fever control, hydration, oxygen and, if indicated, antibiotics for secondary infection. These measures are best provided in the LTC facility. Our ill, frail elderly patients are unlikely to benefit from ICU. In the situation of acute respiratory distress, they are unlikely to qualify for mechanical ventilation.

The LTC pharmacists are seeing an unpredicted demand at this time. Physicians are providing remote and virtual care. The pharmacists do not the predictability of usual physician rounds. Drug changes put a stress on pharmacy operations. Moreover, pharmacists are affected because of illness and mandatory self-isolation. A representative of the pharmacists states “orders are coming massively every day now...[there is] a spike in mid-week changes.” The request is the prescribers reserve making medication changes only if necessary.

New COVID-19 Specialty Group Available on eConsult

Dr. Celeste Fung, of Ottawa, contributes the following. _eConsult is a secure web-based tool that allows physicians and nurse practitioners timely access to specialist advice for all patients, often eliminating the need for an in-person specialist visit. Perhaps now more than ever, this service will be a vital tool to improve access to advice for residents living in long-term care and avoid unnecessary resident transfers.

Through the Ontario eConsult Service, physicians and nurse practitioners have access to over 90 BASE™ managed specialty groups and a directory of individual specialists. As a result of the current COVID-19 pandemic, OTN and the Ontario eConsult Centre of Excellence have created a COVID-19 BASE™ managed specialty group. This group enables physicians and nurse practitioners to ask clinical questions to infectious disease specialist electronically and receive a response within days. This is the only group that allows for population-based, non-patient specific clinical questions.

The COVID-19 BASE™ Managed Specialty Group is now available province-wide. It is:

- Accessed through the BASE™ managed specialty option and listed under Infectious Disease and Public Health
- A group of Infectious Disease specialists who can answer both patient-specific and general questions about COVID-19
- For non-patient specific questions please enter the patient information as follows:
 - o First Name: COVID19
 - o Last Name: COVID19
 - o Date of Birth: 1900-01-01
 - o Select OHIP number not available

Please note: Patient screening for COVID-19 must still be done through Public Health Services.

If you need a refresher on how to submit an eConsult, you can watch our training video here: <https://youtu.be/-zglxVrLiYQ>.

To sign up for eConsult or for more information about the service, please contact the Ontario eConsult Centre of Excellence at eConsultCOE@toh.ca or go to www.eConsultOntario.ca. To learn more about eConsult in LTC, click here. [FAQ hyperlinked from here.]

The OMA Section for Long Term Care and Care of the Elderly is the LTC physicians' representation to the government. On March 20, the Section informed members that the new telephone/video codes are available to LTC physicians. A nurse or other inter-professional team member is considered a "patient's representative" who initiates the telephone or video visit. These visits or other virtual care would not qualify for a visit if also billing W010. The virtual codes are effective as of March 14. It will take approximately one month before the computers can recognize them so please wait for additional details before submitting these codes. It has not yet been confirmed if documentation of a virtual visit is recognized as a visit for the management fee (W010).

Dr. Hugh Boyd is Chair of the Section. Become a member of the Section to receive further information:

1. Log into the OMA website [OMA Website \(www.oma.org\)](http://www.oma.org) and click "Sign in" in the top right corner.
2. Click "View my profile" then select "groups" on the left side and then click "Join another Secondary Section" to add our section.
3. Next Click "Profile" from the left and scroll down to find "Constituency Email Consents" and click "Constituency Email Service" ensure allows for updates you with these changes. Click "Email sharing" if you would like to share your email address with the Chair. That is not necessary to receive updates.

In the recent communication, Dr. Boyd states, "We understand this will have a phenomenal impact on you and our fellow colleagues and recognize many physicians have also lost significant billing opportunities during this pandemic. Our core values at the OMA including being innovative, bold and responsive so we will advocate for further changes to empower quality medical care to be provided in your nursing home."

We welcome our members and others to contribute to the daily COVID-19 Report. Suggested length of items is 100 – 200 words. Do you have COVID-19 advice for your colleagues in LTC. Do you have a COVID-19 experience to share? Contact office@oltcc.ca