

COVID-19 REPORT

This begins the sixth week of ramped up public health measures and lockdowns in our LTC homes to limit the deadly spread of COVID-19. Efforts were thwarted by delays in testing and inadequate supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE). Timely measures, like restricting visitors, have saved lives. Older facilities with residents in close proximity saw disparate and deadly bad luck. The number of confirmed and presumptive cases in Canada is 35,056 with 1,587 deaths. Ontario has 10,578 cases, with 553 deaths. LTC accounts for 50% of deaths. This is the same rate reported by other countries.

The COVID-19 pandemic will bring lasting changes to how clinicians practice in long term care. The current crisis advances conversations in advance care planning and goals of care. Opportunities for virtual care are growing. There is also opportunities to improve the relationship between LTC, emergency departments and acute care.

Transitions Between Nursing Homes and EDs in the Age of COVID-19 webinar today will target medical directors, DOCs and leadership in LTCs; and emergency physicians/ED leadership around improving transitions between the two sites specifically at this time of COVID. The goals of this webinar are:

1. To hear from specialists in both nursing home care and ED care about the challenges of NH/ED transfers particularly during the COVID pandemic.
2. To understand what level of care your local NH can provide and ensure you are sending your patient to the right level of NH care.
3. To address issues around discharge or return of COVID- positive or - suspected to nursing homes.
4. To consider some guidance about improving transfers and communication between the two sites.
5. To highlight 2-3 promising models of care that are already succeeding in various settings.

The moderator of this expert panel is Dr. Don Melady from Toronto. This webinar is today, Monday, April 20, at 3:00 PM. More information for the webinar can be found at: [GECD Webinar, Apr 20](#)

Virtual Care The COVID-19 pandemic presents a need to provide responsible and flexible care. Virtual or remote care becomes a requirement for ongoing care during this unprecedented time. The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario “encourages physicians to consider adopting virtual care into their practice during the pandemic to help ensure access to care, to support the conservation of PPE, and to avoid increasing the risk of exposure to COVID-19. Physicians should, wherever possible, provide care virtually that they would have otherwise provided in person.”

Physicians providing care virtually must continue to meet the same standard of care that would apply to an in-person visit (see [Telemedicine](#) policy). While there will still be some types of care that cannot be provided virtually, supporting access and minimizing risk of exposure to the virus are important factors to consider as physicians decide what care to provide virtually. As with all instances of using virtual care, physicians must exercise their judgment to ensure it is appropriate in the circumstances and that they are able to provide care that is in the best interests of their patients and public safety.

[CPSO COVID-19-FAQs-for-Physicians](#)

Virtual care not only includes remote care to the staff at the LTC facility but also calls to families and consultants. The OMA also strongly encourages all members to leverage virtual care, particularly in the context of COVID-19. The OMA resource page provides information on access to the Ontario Telemedicine Network and billing codes.

[OMA Virtual Care COVID-19](#)

The Canadian Medical Protective Association (CMPA) recognizes that the digital revolution changes how doctors and patients interact. Telemedicine includes the telephone, email, videoconferencing and web portals, and a myriad of mobile apps for smartphones and tablets. “Medical regulatory authorities (Colleges) generally advise physicians to use their professional judgment to determine whether telemedicine is appropriate in a particular circumstance, and whether telemedicine will enable physicians to meet the standard of care.” Physicians should take appropriate steps to comply with the privacy legislation.

[CMPA Telemedicine - Opportunities, Challenges, Obligations](#)

Share your experience questions about virtual care at office@oltcc.ca