

Hospital's Chief of Staff Provides Update on COVID-19

March 31, 2020- Invermere & District Hospital Chief stresses vigilance and compliance to guidelines to mitigate future surge.

Dr. Gareth Mannheimer, Chief of Staff for the Invermere & District Hospital, and a family physician provides another update on community medical services and asks the community be vigilant and to adhere to guidelines to flatten the COVID-19 curve and to mitigate a possible surge.

Thank you everyone for your strong community support. On behalf of our front-line healthcare professionals, I support the commitment you are making in complying with the Provincial recommendations outlined by the BC Centre for Disease Control. Your actions are keeping our numbers low, our families and community safe while minimizing the strain on our health care system. Your actions are allowing us to focus on patients, to develop our next stage of planning and preparation should our situation deteriorate.

Here is the B.C. view as of today:

- The latest updated information is a total of 1013 cases tested positive. Of this total, 107 are within the Interior Health Region. As part of this total, 19 long term care facilities have confirmed outbreaks. None of these outbreaks are in our region.
- In B.C., 128 people have been hospitalized and 61 of these people are in intensive care. Unfortunately, there were 5 more deaths bringing the B.C. total to 24. The fatality rate so far in B.C. is 2% among cases that test positive. Importantly, 507 people have recovered and returned home.
- All these statistics underscore the importance of each and every one of us diligently complying to the guidelines. Practice social distancing, and if you can, stay at home. If you must go out, stay at least two metres (6.5 feet) from other people.

Here is the summary for our community as of today:

- The local number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in the Columbia Valley is stable. I am pleased to say our confirmed positive patients are all making an encouraging recovery. We have heard from many people who want to help. You can help us best by staying home, practicing social distancing and washing your hands frequently.
- If you are symptomatic, please isolate at home and use the provincial self-assessment tool at <https://bc.thrive.health/covid19> to check your symptoms and to see if you need further assessment.
- Your local healthcare teams remain ready to respond to questions about your general health and COVID19. The hospital and the clinics can be reached at the following phone numbers listed below.

- Invermere & District Hospital (250) 342-9201
- Invermere Medical Clinic (250) 342-9206
- Chisel Peak Clinic (250) 341-6900

Call us first!. Do not go to the clinics and do not go to the hospital unless it is an emergency.

Our next area for focus is preparation:

- We are anticipating an increase in positive cases over the next one to two weeks with an associated surge in patients requiring hospital care. This will occur because people exposed by the first round of cases (locally or internationally from travel) will reach their anticipated incubation period. In B.C., the current number of patients being admitted to hospital is steady, but not overwhelming. We are preparing for this. But, if we experience a sudden surge of patients, it will be more challenging and we are preparing for this. We are working very hard regionally and locally with governments, doctors and health care providers to prepare our response for this challenging scenario.
- I must stress that we as a community have the ability to dictate what the next few weeks will look like. I know it isn't easy. Many people are getting frustrated. But, we must be more diligent with social and physical distancing, hand washing, remembering not to touch your face and staying home where possible. You are required to be compliant with quarantine for at least 10-14 days if you are symptomatic. I will remind you that it's mandatory that anyone arriving in B.C. from outside Canada must self-isolate for 14 days upon arrival.
- We will have a far better idea of what the future weeks and months may look like after the next two weeks. We are asking for your patience and your diligence in following the rules.

Our community response to my requests last week has been tremendous:

- I would like to thank our phenomenal local seamstresses for your call to action to help us with various PPE items including masks, scrub caps, gown and scrubs. Because of the overwhelming generosity of all of you, we are in a more secure situation than a few weeks ago. We are trying to co-ordinate to ensure that your time and skill is best utilized. I would request you contact our local co-ordinator Gail Gross at g.gross@telus.net. She will be able to help with advice on what to make, source materials as well as pick up and drop off. I think there is the potential to utilize these items in numerous sites in our community and a clear process and inventory will help to ensure this is done in a safe, co-ordinated and fair way.
- I would encourage anyone that is interesting in gauging how you can help to visit www.volunteercv.ca. We are coping with our current resources but planning in the event of them being saturated. I would encourage anyone that feels they are willing and

able to help particularly those with medical training to sign up so that we can make contact and plan accordingly.

- I would also like to single out the local grocery stores and their staff who have done such a brave and unreal job of staying open to allow the rest of use to have access to what we need. The ability of the community to stay at home and follow the recommendations pivots around their ability to have access to food and the basic items that makes our lives that much easier. Thank you so much.

Finally, I know this typically vibrant, social and active town is struggling with quiet streets and closed shops. I imagine you all miss chatting and visiting with friends and loved ones and sharing the activities that make this such a wonderful place to live. Let me assure you that the sacrifices you are making will make COVID-19 as manageable as we can. It is not forever, but right now it is important and I appreciate your patience, strength and resilience.