

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** All Physicians

**FROM:** Dr. Heather Morrison, Chief Public Health Officer and Joint Response Team Co-Lead  
Marion Dowling, HPEI Chief Nursing Officer and Joint Response Team co-lead  
Dr. Andre Celliers, Executive Director Medical Affairs and HPEI Planning Section CO-Chief  
Kelley Rayner, Director of Primary Care and HPEI Operations Branch Director  
Tara Ferguson, IPAC Manager and Joint Response Team Safety Officer

**DATE:** March 16, 2020

**SUBJECT:** Advice for Physicians during COVID-19 pandemic

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Dear colleagues,

As we continue our efforts to slow the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are providing advice regarding public health measures in our communities. As front-line health-care providers, having resources and information for your patients and information and resources to keep us and our staff and other health care providers/colleagues protected is of utmost importance. The information and overall advice is based on Canadian guidance, but it is changing and being updated as we learn more each day both globally and nationally.

From a health services perspective our priorities right now are to:

- Support public health measures to limit the spread of the virus through education, early identification and initiate appropriate assessment of suspected cases, and management of cases
- Support our front-line health care workers with information and supports as they respond to the patient's/clients health and information needs
- Ensure our health-care system is as equipped and prepared as possible to respond to the potential spread of the illness

As of Sunday, March 15th:

- PEI has one confirmed case of COVID-19.
- For individuals who have returned from travel outside the country since March 8th, 2020, they are being asked to self-isolate upon their return for 14 days. This includes health care providers.
- Staff and front-line primary care and emergency room providers are asked to remind patients that if they are presenting with COVID-19 symptoms (fever, cough and difficulty breathing) and they have traveled outside the country in the last 14 days, they are to self-isolate and call the 811 line. They should not visit their family doctor or the emergency department unless they are experiencing symptoms that require treatment of a physician or nurse practitioner.
- **Health PEI is going to essential primary care services** as below that will continue until directed otherwise:
  - Callbacks for lab/DI/Consultant reports - practitioner to determine if callback can be done by phone

- INRs (if possible/safe to do so, call only those out of range)
  - Telephone triage
  - Acute illness and issues requiring immediate follow up (i.e. strept throat, new cancer diagnosis, diabetics with very high blood glucose)
  - regularly scheduled injections
  - Prescription refills - do via fax if possible/safe to do so
  - New insulin starts
  - pediatric diabetes
  - insulin pump therapy
  - Gestational diabetes
- The following programs/services will be stopped at this point in time **until directed otherwise:**
- cardiopulmonary rehab - already canceled
  - foot assessments
  - education sessions or group appointments
  - cryotherapy
  - ear syringing
  - routine primary care or diabetes appointments (we must ensure that we are clear on the reason for the appointment prior to canceling)
  - PAP screening
  - spirometry (routine /non urgent)
  - INSPIRED home visits
  - discontinue issuing new colorectal screening kits
  - This list will be updated as required and as further discussions occur.

### **Guidelines for Practice**

Our goal is to continue to provide healthcare in the community when safe. Please do not redirect patients to the emergency room or hospital when avoidable.

Our guidance for booking appointments and consults as of March 16, 2020:

### **Physical Space**

- Signage for your office is attached and includes:
  - (1) sign explaining the criteria for calling 811 should be placed on all entrances and doors to the office (coming later today)
  - (2) signs advising that patient should hand wash upon arrival should be posted in the waiting room
- Consider keeping the reception window closed
- It is recommended to keep six feet between patients (for example remove some chairs from the waiting room)
- Remove all magazines, toys, etc. from the waiting room
- Consider spacing appointments to reduce waiting room crowding

### **Precautions/infection Control**

- Wash your hands frequently
- Disinfect surfaces as appropriate (examples may include bed, desk, chair, door handle, sink handle, paper towel dispenser, waiting room)

## Virtual Care

- For patients in self-isolation, fee code xx13 can be billed for a telephone or video visit. The physician must document the encounter and add “COVID-19 self-isolation” as a comment.
- More information on virtual care will follow.

## Other Information

- If necessary, prenatal care for Charlottetown patients can be temporarily transferred to obs-gyne. The physician should contact the obs-gyne office at 902-629-8801 to request this service.
- Consider when possible keeping phone lines open Monday to Friday (regular office hours) to help prevent patients presenting to the emergency room or hospital.

## **MORE INFORMATION COMING SOON**

We do not have all the answers to questions that we know are top of mind for you. Please trust that our COVID Joint Response Team is actively working to answer those questions. Expect to have more direction in the next 24-48 hours, on these and other topics:

1. Building health-system capacity in the event of widespread virus.
2. Enabling increased use of virtual care.
3. Securing the necessary protective gear, should it be required.

## **STAY INFORMED**

The circumstances are evolving at a very rapid pace. We will be issuing updates on a regular basis to ensure you have the most up-to-date information. Further information about hospital care changes will be provided by the facility incident commander.

## **RESOURCES**

[Febrile Respiratory Screening Tool](#)

[Guidelines for the Management and Control of COVID-19](#)

[PEI Government COVID-19 Website](#)

This is an unprecedented experience for our province. We appreciate your support and help as we navigate this new territory together, in a way that helps Islanders stay safe, healthy and calm.