COVID-19 response

The CMA is responding to COVID-19 – working to inform, support and advocate on behalf of our members and all Canadians. We’re here for physicians at the forefront of the pandemic, as they confront what is undoubtedly the most severe health issue of our time.

We’re steadfast in our commitment to respond to the pandemic by:

- Advising government officials and pressing for action
- Launching new tools and resources to assist physicians
- Fighting to stop the spread of the virus and funding Covid-19 efforts
- Curating and creating credible content for members and all Canadians
- Supporting physicians’ health and wellness
- Addressing the financial impact on physicians

Here’s a snapshot of our COVID-19 response, week over week.
**Week of March 8**

**Advising government**
- The CMA is at the centre of the federal response, meeting with ministers, participating in the Chief Public Health Officer Health Professional Forum, Health Canada Multi-Stakeholder Steering Committee on Drug Shortages, and Health Canada Tier Assignment Committee.
- We bring the medical perspective to the public health response – helping devise national action plans to address all facets of COVID-19. (ongoing)

**Keeping physicians up to date**
- The CMAJ Group publishes news updates and new content regularly, including blogs and a podcast series. (ongoing)
- Joule’s Ask a Librarian team curates evidence-based resources related to the pandemic. (ongoing)

**Pressing government for action**
- The CMA identifies six pressing recommendations for federal government measures to help manage the pandemic; advocacy on these recommendations is ongoing.

Media statement (March 12)
“The CMA believes that virtual access to providers should be scaled up immediately to alleviate potential exposure and to respond to growing demands.”

Media statement (March 13)
“…all measures that promote social distancing should be implemented to flatten the curve of exposure and spread.”

Media statement (March 14)
“... The CMA applauds the Quebec government’s decision to expand access to telemedicine at a time when Quebec and the whole world must take strong measures to deal with COVID-19.”

Launch of cma.ca/COVID

President’s COVID-19 bi-weekly update is launched to keep our membership informed and engaged

March 12 issue
Week of March 15

Fighting to stop the spread of COVID-19

- We champion public health measures to stop the spread of the virus and launch a far-reaching marketing campaign with digital and radio ads, direct mail and web content.
- We publish Stop the Spread handouts for physicians to use with patients – in five languages in addition to English and French: Arabic, Cantonese, Mandarin, Punjabi and Spanish.
- We also create information posters for physicians to download and share with patients.

Supporting physicians’ health and wellness

- Supporting members’ well-being has never been more pressing, and the CMA launches new resources, tools and programs. (ongoing)
- One of many examples: The CMA’s executive vice-president of physician health and wellness, Dr. Caroline Gérin-Lajoie, collaborates with the University of Ottawa’s Department of Emergency Medicine on a video and resources on managing stress and anxiety.

Pressing for action

- The CMA presidents – Dr. Sandy Buchman, Dr. Gigi Osler and Dr. Ann Collins – take to the airways to press for action, share public health messaging and support the overall response. (ongoing)

Curating and creating COVID-19 resources

- The CMA publishes a number of key resources for health professionals with additional tools and resources being deployed every week. (ongoing)

Collaborating with key stakeholders

- The CMA works with PTMAs and affiliates, participates in the Medical Forum and co-signs several calls for action. (ongoing)

Media statement (March 15)
“… the CMA asks employers to discontinue requirements for sick notes … as they place an unnecessary burden on the health care system at a time where we all need to focus on addressing one of the biggest public health challenges of our time.”

Media statement (March 16)
“The CMA is encouraged to see the seriousness with which the federal government is treating the pandemic … and taking an evidence-based response to the exceptional challenges presented by COVID-19.”

Media statement (March 18)
“As many Canadians continue to return home from international travel, the CMA wants to reinforce that everyone needs to take public health measures around COVID-19 seriously. “

Media statement (March 20)
“The CMA welcomes the Government of Canada’s decision to mobilize businesses and manufacturers to urgently produce personal protective equipment and other critical supplies needed to combat COVID-19.”

President’s bi-weekly COVID-19 update keeps our membership informed and engaged

March 17 issue  March 19 issue
Week of March 22

Scaling up virtual care

- Responding to members’ need to quickly ramp up virtual care in their practice, Joule launches a virtual care playbook authored by a leading authority, Dr. Mark Dermer.

Supporting physicians’ health and wellness

- We launch a series of resources, including a COVID-19 wellness checklist and self-assessment tool for health care providers, along with a resource for health care providers on talking to their kids about COVID-19.
- CMA President-Elect Dr. Ann Collins blogs about her self-isolation experience after returning from international travel.

Fighting to stop the spread of COVID-19

- The CMA launches radio advertising throughout the country on the importance of physical distancing – in partnership with most PTMAs. Spotify ads help us reach a younger demographic. (ongoing)

Media statement (March 24)

- “…we must ensure those working directly with the public, including physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and social workers, are properly protected and supported, so that they can continue to play their role in the response.”

Direct mail in Great Toronto Area – cobranded with the OMA

Launch of covidkindness.ca

President’s bi-weekly COVID-19 update helps keep our membership informed and engaged

March 24 issue
March 26 issue
Pressing for action

- Responding to members’ urgent call for action on PPE, the CMA launches a national survey on the current state of PPE on the frontlines.
- The alarming results are immediately shared with government officials, with the CMA president meeting with federal Health Minister Patty Hajdu to emphasize that:
  - More PPE needs to make its way to physicians and all health care workers immediately
  - Better coordination and transparency are needed between the federal and provincial/territorial governments to ensure supplies are tracked and status information is made readily available.

Helping members navigate ethical questions

- The CMA promptly develops a new policy recognizing that critical care equipment may become scarce and that physicians need an ethical pathway to decision-making. The CMA Board of Directors holds a special meeting and approves a new Framework for Ethical Decision Making During the Coronavirus Pandemic.
- The CMA policy on duty of care during a pandemic is another key resource to support members.

Resources for physicians

- With financial support from the CMA, Pallium is providing physicians with free access to six online palliative care modules in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These modules are designed as an introduction to the palliative care approach and focus on important knowledge and skills required in providing this type of care.

Addressing members’ priorities

- We continue to answer members’ questions and take their suggestions through our Member Service Centre. (ongoing)

President’s bi-weekly COVID-19 update helps keep our membership informed and engaged

March 31 issue  April 2 issue

Media statement (April 2)

“Asking health care workers to be on the frontlines of this pandemic without the proper equipment is irresponsible and shortages must be addressed immediately. People’s lives are on the line here.”

Media statement (April 3)

“Minister Hajdu confirmed that the federal government is confronted with a global demand for PPE but remains steadfast in working with the provinces and territories to secure more supplies domestically and internationally. The minister also acknowledged the need for more clarity and transparency around this process, responding directly to a CMA recommendation.”
Week of April 4

Addressing financial impact on physicians

- Recognizing that income stabilization is of concern to members, we engage MNP to research current federal government programs and how they apply to medical practices and physicians.
- We work closely with the PTMAs on the issue of income stabilization, meeting weekly and sharing developments in each jurisdiction.
- We continue to work with key stakeholders, such as the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, to bring forward our collective concerns to the federal government.

Pressing for action

- CMA President Dr. Buchman presents to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health, emphasizing the critical need to secure more PPE and other medical equipment.

Supporting physicians’ health and wellness

Joule launches a new physician learning series, moderated by Dr. Jillian Horton, designed to support frontline physicians in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Episode 1**: Making virtual care work for you
- **Episode 2**: Managing isolation and building resilience
- **Episode 3**: Maintaining high performance in times of stress
- **Episode 4**: Running on empty: Staying healthy during difficult times
- **Episode 5**: Moral distress: When core values are at stake
- **Episode 6**: Building resilience in times of uncertainty

CMA executive vice-president of physician health and wellness, Dr. Caroline Gérin-Lajoie collaborates on a peer support tip sheet for physicians.

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Media statement (April 7)

“...asking health care workers to be on the frontlines of this pandemic without the proper equipment is unacceptable.”

Launch of covidquestions.ca

The CMA, the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada and the College of Family Physicians of Canada have launched covidquestions.ca, a website where top questions from the public about COVID-19 will be answered by reputable sources.
Week of April 12

Pressing for action

- The CMA welcomes the federal government’s release of new interim guidance on infection prevention and control of COVID-19 in long-term care homes.
- We encourage all provincial and territorial governments to adopt these guidelines in their jurisdictions, to complement the measure they’ve already put in place to help safeguard the health of residents and employees in these residences.
- We continue to work with the federal government to ensure Canadian seniors are being supported and cared for in the best way possible, during COVID-19 and beyond.

Supporting physicians’ health and wellness

- We launch a series of other resources, including a psychological first aid tool with techniques to reduce stress, and an article titled “Lessons from an astronaut: how to stay resilient in isolation”.

Curating and creating COVID-19 resources

- The CMA publishes a number of key resources for health professionals, with additional tools and resources being added every week.
- Recently added resources include a two-page handout for medical and non-medical personnel on providing brief psychological counselling during the pandemic.

Media statement (April 14)

“Scotiabank and the CMA, in collaboration with MD Financial Management, […] will be contributing $200,000 to the Code Life Ventilator Challenge.”

Media statement (April 14)

“…COVID-19 is an important reminder that all governments need to work together to best support and care for our seniors in this country.”

Media statement (April 16)

“We join all Canadians to express our deepest condolences to the family, friends, colleagues and loved ones of Dr. Huy-Hao Dao, who we understand passed away from COVID-19 related illness in Quebec.”

Media statement (April 17)

“To support physicians and other health care workers in this area, the CMA is collaborating with Pallium Canada (Pallium) to provide free online access to their training modules, along with other resources.”

President’s bi-weekly COVID-19 update helps keep our membership informed and engaged

April 14 issue  April 16 issue

Media statement (April 14)

With nearly half of all COVID19 deaths in linked to outbreaks in long-term care homes, we welcome the GoC’s interim guidelines and encourage provincial/territorial gov. to adopt across long-term care + seniors’ residences. #CMAhealth

Full statement: bit.ly/2XcBd3yA

I have seen the heartbreaking stories of outbreaks in long-term care homes. We know these residents are more vulnerable. To better protect them, we have released new recommendations for these homes: on.ca/g/gO/2pO9

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Canada.ca/coronavirus
Week of April 19

Funding COVID-19 efforts

- The CMA Foundation announces on April 21 a commitment of $20 million, one of the largest COVID-19 donations to date. This funding will be allocated through targeted grants to support urgent needs within the health care system, including:
  - $5 million to the Frontline Fund for Healthcare Workers and $5 million to benefit community hospitals
  - $5 million to the Foundation for Advancing Family Medicine’s COVID-19 Pandemic Response and Impact Grant Program
  - $5 million to help address financial challenges for medical learners, in partnership with medical schools
  - $250,000 to the Doctors without Borders/ Médecins sans frontières’ COVID-19 Crisis Fund

Pressing for action

- The CMA launches a second member survey on the current state of PPE on the frontlines.
- The preliminary results point to some very modest improvements in the state of supply, compared to results from our earlier survey at the end of March.
- We will be sharing these valuable insights with the federal government, to help make a difference in how they’re responding to this critical issue.

Supporting physicians’ financial security

- As new measures are announced and the eligibility criteria updated, the CMA continues to pull together the latest expert advice from accounting firm MNP on current federal programs and how they apply to physicians in a variety of practice settings.

Curating and creating COVID-19 resources

- The CMA publishes a number of key resources for health professionals, with additional tools and resources being added every week.
- Recently added resources include access to more online palliative care training and a new series of mindfulness workshops from Joule.

President’s bi-weekly COVID-19 update helps keep our membership informed and engaged

- April 21 issue
- April 23 issue