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Highlights from the April 21 town hall

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The strength of our organization and staff continues to be reflected as the COVID-19 situation evolves on a daily basis. We are in awe of your commitment to our patients, families and clients during this challenging time, as well as your desire to educate yourselves and stay informed.

Thank you for your ongoing participation in our town halls – please take two minutes to [give us your feedback](#) on the town halls and other COVID-19 communication.

Get the highlights of this morning's town hall in the video above, or [watch the full webcast](#) at any time. No POD connection is required for either one.

Below, you will find summaries of the leadership updates as well as time stamps for each of the questions answered during the town hall. Remember, you can always find the latest bulletins and town hall recordings on our external website at www.phsa.ca/covid19staff.

[WATCH THE FULL WEBCAST NOW](#)

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Hot topics

Situational update from Susan Wannamaker and Dr. Maureen O'Donnell, co-chairs of the Emergency Operations Centre

Last Friday, Dr. Bonnie Henry and Minister Adrian Dix gave an update on how we're doing compared to the rest of Canada and other countries, and how we're doing in B.C. For more information on the modelling data and analytics, please visit the [Modelling & Projections page](#) on the BCCDC website.

We are doing quite well as a province as a result of the work by public health and our own work with physical distancing and other precautions.

We are starting to come down from the other side of the curve, but we have to keep going for at least another couple weeks. Overall, things are very encouraging.

As Dr. Henry mentioned, this is not going to be over. We haven't reached herd immunity and we have to keep some measures in effect.

The Ministry of Health, along with BCCDC and other partners, have been working actively to determine next steps. How do we respond as a society and as health care system? How do we get ready if there is another wave? How do we ramp up other services? These questions are all being looked at in the coming weeks.

Operational highlights

Labs has introduced new testing criteria and guidelines.

Our Supply Chain remains very active and is starting to look at what more we need, and will we be needing it the same way if the numbers are starting to come down? This is ongoing work. We are also looking at patients with chronic diseases and any long term impacts that may have occurred from not seeking care during this time.

BC Children's Hospital and BC Women's Hospital + Health Centre has been in planning mode with Child Health BC in preparation for a pediatric and maternal surge. They are working in partnership with Vancouver Coastal Health and Fraser Health, while thinking about the entire province. We have a strong foundation to execute if we see a surge in COVID-19.

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The Mobile Medical Unit has been deployed to Abbotsford to support the COVID-19 outbreak in federal corrections in Mission. BC Corrections is also supporting federal corrections with materials we've developed and working with Fraser Health.

Yesterday, the Province of B.C. announced a new, collaborative framework that will help ensure people living in rural, remote and Indigenous communities have access to critical health care to meet their unique needs during the COVID-19 pandemic and into the future. This framework is the result of strong partnerships between BC Emergency Health Services, First Nations Health Authority and Northern Health, among others, and shows that out of this crisis came an opportunity to strengthen access to care for patients across B.C.

The executive leadership team is looking ahead at the plan for recovery and will start thinking about resuming surgeries. There will be more to come on how we'll move to the new normal.

Thank you all for your tremendous work and dedication during this unprecedented time.

HR update from Jaci Edgeworth, VP, People Services

Although we are thinking about recovery, there will be no quick return to what we used to do or how we used to operate as an organization. As Dr. Henry has said, we aren't expecting anything to change this month. Mid-May could see the possible reopening of some things. Restrictions of varying degrees will remain in place until a vaccine becomes available or herd immunity is achieved.

We need to continue to be patient and stay the course with our current restrictions.

There have been questions about how long we will work from home. It's too early to answer but we will be following the direction of public health official.

There will need to be adjustments to work spaces for physical distancing. Please continue to follow the guidance we gave in mid-March – work from home where possible until further notice. Thanks again for your patience.

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Answering your Slido questions

Remember to visit our [Slido question page](#), which will remain open under the event code #PHSATownHall. 'Like' questions that are similar to yours to help us prioritize topics for future town halls.

You can view the 'live' questions at any time by visiting: [Slido.com/phsatownhall](https://slido.com/phsatownhall)

[Open the webcast recording](#) and skip to the time stamps listed below for specific questions and answers:

Public health questions

What percentage of people aged 40-65 who were previously healthy with no comorbidities required hospitalization/ICU? **25:22**

How can we help support those on the margins who may be hit proportionally harder by medical and financial challenges in the coming months? **23:10**

How can we best combat misinformation around COVID? I've heard questionable things from coworkers in health care and their blasé attitudes about the situation. **44:50**

What percentage of population needs to be immune for herd immunity to work? How long will it take to test for that based on previous virus information? **26:38**

Regarding carpooling: can we still do this? We all live in the same town house complex and work in the same unit in the hospital? **36:00**

Our health officials tell us to stay home and to not meet with people we don't live with (even outside). Why was this contradicted in today's (Apr. 16) town hall? **19:48**

Infection control questions

If a symptomatic visitor comes in wearing a cloth mask, should it be switched to a surgical mask or does it make no difference? **32:20**

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Infection control questions

Should health care workers continue to work at two sites when one is at significantly higher risk for COVID? For example, working in Emerg or ICU and then caring for a more vulnerable population such as oncology, maternity, NICU. **41:27**

Local production of PPE will likely increase available supply, will the guideline change? PPE use seems to be based on availability vs. all evidence available. **37:42**

Should we be concerned about parcels sent between healthcare sites? Some items cannot be sanitised because they are not waterproof (paper, cardboard). **39:26**

Given the high false negative rate of COVID swabs particular with pediatric patients, do you advise health care staff to maintain outlined COVID PPE precautions until hospital discharge (even with a COVID neg result) unless there is overwhelming evidence of a bacterial source of symptoms? **56:37**

Why are all staff wearing masks/goggles all day if there is a shortage? If only one patient on the unit is on droplet/contact and that same staff member is the only one entering the room, the other health care providers are wasting masks. **58:58**

Staff are wearing PPE outside of patient areas – goggles on head, masks under chin, dangling from ears. What are the risks of this behaviour? Should it stop? **47:32**

Should we use an N95 mask when you return to a room where an aerosolizing procedure has taken place given aerosolizing particles can remain in the air for up to three hours? **49:35**

Service-level questions

What is the surge planning for paediatric care in BC? **37:29**

What happens to staff in outpatient clinics if service levels are reduced? Are they laid off or on a leave? **34:35**

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HR-related questions

There is a plan to move over 150 staff into an open concept, densely packed office space in May. How will COVID-19 affect this plan? Is it appropriate? Can work from home become the norm? **17:30**

Workplace Health asks us to isolate for mild sore throat without testing and may use up sick days unnecessarily. Can we code as unpaid leave to avail of government funding? **30:42**

For those working at home, would PHSA ask staff to come back to the office when the situation improves before kids go back to school? Finding childcare is hard. **29:11**

Can you speak to the practice of asking for donations for health care staff on social media? Could these donations be better served for food banks etc.? **33:14**

Will the vacation cancel period for employee kids go back to school? Finding childcare is hard. **29:11** extended past the original 60 days started on March 13th, now that the state of emergency has been extended? **40:09**

For paid temp accommodation: What is meant by not being able to "safely commute to and from your primary residence"? If you are redeployed to a site outside your geographic location, how do you know if you qualify and who should you ask? **54:42**

Given the psychological stress of dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, would PHSA be willing to extend Homewood Health EFAP services to include parents and siblings of employees? Currently offered to employees, their spouses and children (grateful), but hoping it can help other members of the family. **52:40**

The following question will be taken offline for further research:

Could you give us statistics: how many people died from flu and pneumonia last year (all cases) and how many people has died this year (all cases including COVID)?

Medical journal report on 138 cases in Wuhan hospital noted that nosocomial transmission was 41%, including 41 health care workers. What are the stats for HCW transmission in BC?

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The following question will be taken offline for further research:

We are hearing in the media about resources for vulnerable populations. What is available and how do we access these services for clients leaving provincial corrections? i.e. For those at risk of homelessness, or with mental health or substance use concerns.