

LTC Pearls

New COVID-19 precautions for visitors to Ontario LTC homes were announced this week. Beginning last month, LTC residents, or their substitute decision-maker, can designate two caregivers or essential visitors, who provide direct care to residents, such as helping with feeding, mobility, hygiene, or cognitive stimulation. They can be family members or friends, privately hired caregivers, paid companions and/or translators. In areas of high community spread, only one visitor can visit the home at a time. Areas of high community spread are Ottawa, Toronto and Region of Peel. All visitors must wear surgical/procedure masks inside long-term care homes. Essential visitors are also required to wear additional personal protective equipment for interactions with residents who are self-isolating, suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19. In communities of high community spread, only essential visitors, including up to one caregiver per resident, are allowed to visit.

[New COVID-19 Precautions for LTC, Oct 5](#)

"The second wave of COVID-19 is hitting some parts of Ontario harder than others," said Dr. Merrilee Fullerton, Minister of Long-Term Care. "We're making changes to keep people living and working in long-term care homes safe, wherever they are in the province." Dr. Fullerton will speak at the opening of OLTCC's annual conference on Friday, October 16. Other plenary speakers on opening day are Dr. Allison McGeer, infectious disease specialist and Dr. Roger Skinner, Chair of the OCCO Geriatric and LTC Review Committee. <https://www.oltcc.ca/annual-conference>



Improving medical services in Canadian long term care homes

An article by several OLTCC colleagues in this week's Canadian Family Physician revisits the vulnerability of LTC residents in the COVID-19 pandemic: older building designs, staffing, insufficient supplies, lack of pandemic preparedness, and inconsistent infection prevention and control (IPAC) practices. The paper makes the following recommendations:

- Establish expectations for physicians' visits and care in LTC.
- Standardize a process for virtual care, when it is required.
- Adjust remuneration of the physicians and Medical Directors for the time required.
- Fund continuing professional development in LTC, including the OLTCC Medical Director course.
- Improve access to clinical resources including diagnostics and consultations.
- Assure adequate access to personal protective equipment.

<https://www.cfp.ca/news/2020/10/07/10-07>

OLTCC Director and Executive member, Dr. Louis Kennedy writes about the need of mandatory testing of staff and prompt reporting of results:

Most will agree a second wave of COVID 19 is hitting Ontario's LTC homes today. We know from the last wave that once COVID 19 gets into the homes with 4 beds in a room, it is simply impossible to contain.

<https://www.cmaj.ca/content/cmaj/early/2020/07/22/cmaj.201197.1.full.pdf>

We know the immigrant and refugee populations in Ontario made up almost half of Ontario's COVID-19 cases simply because their living spaces are more confined and multigenerational.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/7324073/immigrants-refugees-ontario-covid-19/>

We know immigrants make up the great majority of PSWs in LTC. It is reasonable to expect Ontario's LTC outbreak planning and preparedness is significantly improved for this go around. This likely will not improve outcomes in the LTC homes with dated infrastructure.



The real solution for Ontario's LTC homes today is to do everything possible NOW to prevent the entry of COVID 19 into any LTC home. To do this NP swab testing, according to the directions of our Public Health Officers must be MANDATORY for everyone to gain entry to an LTC facility (emergency excepted) and the DOCUMENTED (not just attested) results of these negative NP swab tests must be available to LTC homes within 24 hours. It really is that simple.

Problem is, if a part time PSW tests positive, they are sent home to self-isolate WITHOUT PAY (with their large family, many of whom are already laid off). So, it is hardly surprising today many LTC staff are now refusing to be tested! Mandatory testing and prompt reporting of these results to our LTC homes is technically and obviously very easy, what is abysmal to date is Ontario's total lack of leadership to just "make it so". The caregivers of at-risk populations must be tested, and these tests prioritized, it really is that simple. Ontario has needed this for months, this debacle needs informed leadership NOW, we need to fix this NOW.

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The Ontario Patient Ombudsman report released yesterday addresses complaints about LTC related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The report recommends a "backstop" or contingency plans for all health care providers to prevent and respond to future outbreaks. Other recommendations are to allow for a limited number of essential care visitors; provide dedicated services for communication between residents and families; and whistle blower protections for health care workers who bring forward concerns.

<https://patientombudsman.ca/Portals/0/documents/covid-19-report-en.pdf>

