

COVID-19 REPORT

There are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Ontario LTC homes so far. Seven deaths and at least a dozen staff have tested positive at the Lynn Valley Care Centre in North Vancouver. These fatalities and transmission highlight the need for the current precautions in our home. Today, the Chief Medical Officer of Health extended the restrictions for long term care to licensed retirement homes, “only allow essential visitors—people visiting residents who are very ill or require end-of-life care—until further notice. Licensed retirement homes will continue to actively screen essential visitors and staff before they enter the home.” There are presently 205 confirmed cases in Ontario. Updates are made twice a day at the government’s COVID-19 web site:
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus#section-0>

A member requests advice on dealing with families who are not compliant with visitor restrictions. These cases need to be referred to the management and security of the home. Individuals may need to be served with a “no trespass” order by the police.

COVID-19 alerts us to greater infection control precautions. Patients on nebulizers require airborne, rather than droplet, precautions. The aerosol particles from nebulizers carry bacteria and viruses into the deep lung. Nebulizer therapy generate respiratory aerosols that carry a longer distance to susceptible bystanders. Nebulization in LTC should be limited to patients with tracheostomy, severe mental and physical disabilities. This is supported by a recent article, from Alberta, in the CMAJ:
<https://www.cmaj.ca/content/re-transmission-corona-virus-nebulizer-serious-underappreciated-risk>

OLTCC support our nurse PR actioner colleagues who are dealing with similar challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, Nurse Led Outreach Team (NLOT) NP’s, like physicians may visit more than one facility. NLOT teams help with avoiding transfers to hospital. The collective responsibility to avoid inappropriate transfers is now greater, not only to reduce the risk of transmission but also to reduce the surge on capacity in acute care.

Your questions, advice and recommendations are welcome. The OLTCC will advocate to the Ministry of Health and others on your reply. One enquiry from a member is that requirement for annual physical examination be waived during the pandemic. In her update on March 13, Dr. Nancy Whitmore, Registrar for the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, states “The CPSO also recognizes that it may be difficult for you to meet all of your professional expectations during these events, including, for example, documentation requirements.” Dr. Whitmore will speak at the annual conference, Practical Pearls in LTC, October 23 – 25. There are many useful links at the CPSO FAQ site:
<https://www.cpso.on.ca/Physicians/Your-Practice/Physician-Advisory-Services/COVID-19-FAQs-for-Physicians>

Our patients with cardiac disease, hypertension, or diabetes, who are treated with ACE inhibitors or ARBs may be at higher risk of developing severe COVID-19 infection. The attached correspondence from Lancet looks at three studies from Wuhan province. The corona virus binds to the ACE2, the expression of this enzyme is increased with ACE2 modulating drugs like ACE inhibitors and ARBs
[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanres/article/PIIS2213-2600\(20\)30116-8/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanres/article/PIIS2213-2600(20)30116-8/fulltext)

Long term care physicians are the experts for medical care in long term care. Your questions, experiences and advice will be shared in these daily COVID-19 Reports. Contact office@oltcc.ca.