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First Meeting Statements of the Strategic COVID-19 Pandemic Committee

Edmonton, AB: The Strategic COVID-19 Pandemic Committee had their first meeting on December 1, 2020 and have the following statements to release:

Public Health Measures

The recent public health measures implemented by the province have not significantly slowed the rate of COVID-19 new infections, which have progressively increased. COVID-19 can't travel on its own. It relies on us going about our daily lives to spread it widely. We plead with Edmontonians and all Albertans to follow the guidelines put in place by the Chief Medical Officer of Health. However, we believe it is also vital that additional effective public health measures are put in place by the government immediately to decrease the rate of new COVID-19 infections to take the current unsustainable pressures off the hospitals, ICUs and healthcare professionals.

Do Not Delay Seeking Care

The acute care hospital system in the province is under unprecedented severe pressure as a consequence of the rise in COVID-19 hospitalizations. Even though the hospitals are in this uncertain situation, it is important that patients who need care other than for COVID-19, for example heart attacks and strokes, continue to go to the Emergency Rooms to get the care they require. Patients with problems of lesser severity should call 811 or their family physician. Edmontonians must not wait to contact their family physician. Clinics and hospitals have protocols to keep patients safe and provide care.

ICU Staffing is Concerning

The ICUs in Edmonton and the province are implementing surge protocols to increase capacity that will make it progressively more difficult to provide quality care. It is relatively straightforward to provide beds, ventilators and other equipment, but staffing surge beds with experienced, competent professionals is a huge challenge. Survival rates in critically ill patients with COVID-19 have improved since the first wave of illnesses due to research and outstanding ICU teams. There is real risk these improved survival rates will not continue in a surge scenario.

Shout Out to All Healthcare Workers

We are grateful to front-line health care professionals and fellow physicians who are caring for large numbers of extremely sick patients with the complications of COVID-19 infections in very difficult circumstances and to Alberta Health Services and Covenant Health leadership who are working to develop surge capacity to accommodate the progressively increasing numbers of patients.

About the Committee

Co-Chairs Dr. James Talbot and Dr. Noel Gibney lead the Committee of medical specialties most affected by COVID-19; public health, intensive care, emergency medicine, family medicine, laboratory medicine, infectious diseases, general internal medicine, psychiatry, paediatrics, and geriatrics to provide the comprehensive expertise needed to respond to this pandemic. The Committee will fulfil the following responsibilities for a COVID-19 response on behalf of the Edmonton zone medical community: 1) monitor public health, the health system, and the government response in Alberta; 2) research and recommend medical guidance; and 3) provide public information and medical advice to Albertans.

About EZMSA: The EZMSA represents 1,700 doctors for local issues in the Edmonton Zone.

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