

December 23, 2020

Public Health Restrictions Over the Holidays and Thank you From Physicians

The Edmonton Zone Medical Staff Association Strategic COVID-19 Pandemic Committee are deeply grateful to the people of Edmonton Zone and Albertans for your help in fighting the COVID virus. With the sacrifices you have made in following the most recent recommendations of our CMOH, Dr. Deena Hinshaw, announced on December 13th, you are successfully reducing the number of new daily cases.

It is vital however, that we do not let our guard down over the Christmas and New Year holidays. Because of the time lag between being exposed to the virus and needing hospitalization, our hard work is not yet easing the burden on the hospital system. The number of patients requiring hospitalization and ICU admission remain unsustainably high. It will take two more weeks of your hard work to relieve the strain on our health care system.

Our stressed system is impacting every Edmontonian and Albertan who needs the system, not only COVID-19 patients. For example, only urgent and semi-urgent gastroenterology consults are occurring, not those who need routine exams. Planned surgical procedures are being postponed to make room for COVID-19 patients. The Fort Saskatchewan Hospital is closing labour and delivery to make room for COVID cases, which will result in less access for pregnant women and their babies. The pediatric ICU at the Stollery Children's Hospital is being converted to an adult ICU and preparations continue at the Butterdome at the University of Alberta for conversion into a "field hospital".

It is clear, the hospital system continues to be stretched to and beyond its limit. We implore Albertans to continue to closely **follow public health restrictions** over the holiday period. Please **do not** crowd the malls (especially on Boxing Day) and, hard as it is, please **obey restrictions** on family gatherings or parties. Please continue to reduce your contacts to the minimum, stay six feet apart, wear a mask, and wash your hands. Also, please **do not delay** contacting your family physician for advice or treatment. We are doing our best to provide care and support to you and your families. We have many office protocols in place to keep you safe while providing care.

This has been a historically difficult year for all of us. Families have lost loved ones, especially elders. They have lost out on opportunities to come together for births, birthdays, weddings, and funerals. Children have missed school and their friends. Young people have sacrificed being with friends, had their schooling and career interrupted and seen their plans for the future disrupted. Business owners have seen their dreams destroyed, suffered losses or gone bankrupt and countless people have lost jobs and experienced poverty. We thank all of you who have made these sacrifices so that the most vulnerable amongst us are safe.

As hard as this year has been, it has also been a year that reaffirmed who we really are. It has shown us how important friends, families and neighbors are and how much we depend on one another. It has reminded us to be grateful to everyone we depend on, the grocery workers, the farmers, the ranchers, the health care workers, the truckers, the teachers and so many more. It has shown us that when we all work together, we can achieve great things, like bending the curve not just once but now a second time. It reminds us that our sacrifices have meaning and have protected all of us, but especially the most vulnerable. When we look back at this, a year from now, it will be with pride that in the worst pandemic in 100 years, we did our best.

On behalf of the Edmonton Zone Medical Staff we wish you a happy holiday and a significantly better new year. You have earned it!

Dr. Noel Gibney, Co-Chair

Dr. James Talbot, Co-Chair

The Strategic COVID-19 Pandemic Committee of the Edmonton Zone Medical Staff Association