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## **Patients and Community Doctors at Risk for Coronavirus**

**Edmonton, AB:** The Government of Alberta is putting Edmontonians and community medical clinics at risk for the coronavirus. The coronavirus is most likely to be detected in community medical clinics first, yet the Government has not contacted family doctors with an adequate plan or information to prepare their clinics. The Edmonton doctors are extremely troubled about the lack of readiness by this government for coronavirus.

### **Coronavirus outbreak**

On March 3, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) stated “countries should be preparing for sustained community transmission” and a 3.4% death rate for the coronavirus. Health Canada has confirmed 34 cases in Ontario, British Columbia and Quebec. Alberta is one flight away from coronavirus in our province. The Government is unwisely wasting precious time Albertans do not have and not preparing front line community family doctors for this pandemic.

### **Request for emergency planning**

Community medical clinics request emergency planning be communicated by the Government to prepare the front line for the coronavirus. The EZMSA wrote to the Government requesting:

- Community doctors be included in COVID-19 planning and communications because not all of them are part of Alberta Health Services (AHS) or belong to a Primary Care Network.
- E-mail updates from the Government when significant changes occur, as doctors cannot predict when the AHS website is updated and should not be informed through the media. It is reckless to not send direct communication resulting in doctors depending on media updates for current information.
- Information about the role of community medical clinics in the greater health care system during the pandemic.
- A list and recommendations of personal protective equipment to be supplied by the Government for community medical clinics.
- A plan for supplying personal protective equipment as suppliers are out of stock for these items. The WHO has confirmed health care workers are endangered from a shortage of personal protective equipment. Front line health care workers must receive equipment. Edmonton doctors are unable to buy masks from their regular supplier.
- Instructions to direct patients who present symptoms of coronavirus.
- Guidance to answer public inquiries.
- Screening of feverish patients before entering a community medical clinic.
- Information on the liability of clinic owners if staff become ill with coronavirus.
- Information on new billing from health services activated for telephone management, as was the case in the last pandemic.
- A plan to bring temporary doctors for additional workforce to meet the additional care demand.
- Information about recruiting doctors for pop-up pandemic clinics or hospital tents.
- Informing the public that they will not be given a sick note to prevent ill patients from spreading coronavirus in health care facilities.
- Information on the role of house visits.

The WHO also stated “it is absolutely essential that countries do not lose this opportunity to strengthen their preparedness systems”. Community doctors are the front line to receive the first case and it is too late to prepare them after the coronavirus is detected in Alberta. The Government is dangerously risking the health of Edmontonians and doctors at time when they need their workforce but have cut doctor compensation as of April 1, 2020. It is irresponsible to not plan for an eminent pandemic and threaten the healthcare needed for the public.

**About EZMSA:** The EZMSA represents 1,600 doctors for local issues in the Edmonton Zone. The EZMSA works closely with the Alberta Medical Association (AMA); however, these are separate organizations with different mandates. The EZMSA is the formal voice of advocacy for doctors in the Edmonton Zone while the AMA advocates for provincial issues.

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