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**MEDICAL HEALTH OFFICERS'
NEWSLETTER
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COVID-19 Vaccination Update #1: Progress, Patient Guidance

Progress:

- More than 23,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccine have been provided within Island Health, including all eligible and consenting long-term care and assisted living residents and staff.
- BC is in Phase 1 of vaccine roll-out, which includes physicians who may provide care for COVID-19 patients in settings like ICU, ER, medical units, and surgical units. Phase 2 is scheduled for February and March, and includes physicians not yet immunized. Details are at bit.ly/365whhR.
- The roll-out continues to be a dynamic process, particularly with variable vaccine supplies.
- The BCCDC COVID-19 Dashboard now includes updates on vaccine distribution by Health Authority (bit.ly/3qHvSds, click on 'Vaccine Information' near bottom right)

Patient Guidance:

Understandably, many questions are being posed to physicians from patients regarding eligibility, benefits, and risks of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Many of these can be addressed by a patient's family physician, who is often the best positioned to provide guidance based on longitudinal knowledge of the patient's medical history.

Public Health staff are experts in vaccine administration and running clinics, but their role is not to be experts in medical considerations of vaccination. Medical Health Officers are consulted by Public Health staff for nuances regarding eligibility, but it is outside of the scope of MHOs to provide individual risk-benefit guidance for clients. Patients should **not** be directed to call Public Health Units to discuss medical considerations regarding vaccines.

Here are some key resources to assist patients with questions regarding COVID-19 vaccines:

- Island Health COVID-19 Vaccine Page: islandhealth.ca/learn-about-health/covid-19/covid-19-vaccine
- Island Health COVID-19 Vaccination Resources for Medical Staff: [m edicalstaff.islandhealth.ca/ covid-19/vaccine](https://medicalstaff.islandhealth.ca/covid-19/vaccine)
- BCCDC COVID-19 Immunization Program Q+A for Health Care Professionals: bit.ly/3sQotKN
- NACI Recommendations on the use of COVID-19 Vaccines: bit.ly/368Fx5c
- Note: pregnancy, breastfeeding, immunosuppression, and autoimmune disease are not absolute contraindications to vaccination. More information is available from the SOGC (bit.ly/3ohOiQm) and the CRA (bit.ly/2KItYtJ)

Specialist referral can be considered for questions relevant to their scope (ex. allergists if concerned of allergy to vaccine components).

The MHO team will continue to funnel resources to the Medical Staff page and through our meetings with physician groups. While it is outside the scope for MHOs to be conducting individualized risk-benefit assessments, if seeking general guidance physicians can contact Dr. Benusic at michael.benusic@viha.ca.