

Public Health



An Ounce of Prevention: Why Investments in Public Health Are Essential

Ian Culbert
Executive Director,
Canadian Public Health Association

The current COVID-19 global pandemic has shone a spotlight on federal, provincial/territorial, and municipal public health services. Efforts to control infectious diseases are an essential public health responsibility, but they're only one aspect of what public health professionals do every day to help improve your overall health and well-being.

The primary focus of public health is protecting and improving communities' health. This population health approach identifies and reduces health threats through policies on issues such as infection control, food safety, support for children, poverty, housing, sanitation, substance use, and the environment.

Public health isn't the same as the publicly-funded health care system. While public health focuses on keeping people healthy, it typically receives less than 10 percent of the total health care budget. As the current pandemic has shown us, when public health is underfunded and unable to respond at full capacity, the economic, human, and political costs are enormous.

Public health is the frontline defence for your health and well-being at the local, provincial/territorial, and federal levels. If you value your health and well-being, then tell your elected officials to invest in public health. ■

This article was sponsored by **Precision Nanosystems.**



RNA Technology at the Forefront of the COVID-19 Pandemic Response



RNA vaccines are emerging as the most promising approach for vaccine development, enabling a rapid response to COVID-19 and future pandemics. Precision NanoSystems (PNI) is a leading provider of technologies for the development of RNA vaccines and medicines, and works with over 200 drug development companies and academic institutions. PNI and many of its partners are now developing vaccine candidates for COVID-19.

RNA vaccines work by providing the code and instructions to your cells to produce representative but harmless parts of the virus. Your immune system uses these virus parts to train itself to defend against

future infections. RNA vaccines are a disruptive technology as they're significantly faster and easier to develop and manufacture than existing vaccine technologies. Through PNI's platform, RNA vaccines can be rapidly produced, manufactured in-country, and evolved to respond to new or changing viruses.

PNI's RNA vaccine platform comprises its proprietary lipid nanoparticle delivery system, NanoAssemblr® manufacturing technology, and its extensive drug development expertise. The company's platform is ushering in the next wave of medicines in infectious diseases, cancer, and rare diseases. ■



To learn more go to [precisionnanosystems.com](https://www.precisionnanosystems.com).

Social Change During COVID-19: How One Community Became Canada's Social Innovation Sandbox



Dr. Alina Turner
CEO &
Co-Founder,
HelpSeeker

Medicine Hat, AB, became well-known as the first city to end homelessness in 2015. In practical terms, it means this community has a response in place that prevents homelessness, and rehuses those who fall through the cracks within 10 days. Never ones to rest on their laurels, Medicine Hatters took on a new challenge to embrace social and technology innovations that tackled root causes to homelessness, including poverty, a lack of affordable housing, and domestic violence.



Jaime Rogers
Medicine Hat
Community
Housing
Society

Building on this energy, local organizations partnered with tech social enterprise HelpSeeker to develop game-changing ideas, the first being the Help Navigator app, which

connects people with the supports closest to them in 22 languages. Since the launch of the app, these have spread to 200 communities across Canada, giving people a way to access almost 140,000 services, and growing everyday. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, this digital network immediately mobilized to support those impacted who were struggling with mental health, domestic violence, or basic needs, generating over 100,000 interactions monthly on the platform at the height of the pandemic.

"I think of Medicine Hat as this perfect innovation sandbox: the community embraces change and doing better and it's not afraid of failing forward," says HelpSeeker CEO and Co-Founder, Dr. Alina Turner. "Seeing this idea develop locally and then spread so quickly inspires us to take on new challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the need for innovation rather than halting it," adds Jaime Rogers of the Medicine Hat Community Housing Society.

What's next for Medicine Hat? Rogers has



convened a local group of movers and shakers to partner with HelpSeeker on a significant systems transformation initiative through a national housing strategy solution lab funded by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). The initiative aims to restructure the local social sector using concepts like digital ID, blockchain technology, and machine learning. "These aren't common terms used in the social realm, but we believe the application of these types of emerging technologies can create significant value in the delivery of social services, in our case, affordable housing," says Steffan Jones, Vice President of Innovation at CMHC. ■

i For more information, visit helpseeker.org.

This article was supported by **Help Seeker** and the **Medicine Hat Community Housing Society**.



Leadership and Efficient Data Management Help Manage COVID-19 Response and Recovery

Michele Sponagle

The COVID-19 pandemic has put health care in the spotlight. It has brought health care's strengths and weaknesses to the forefront, especially in the way patient data is managed. Patient data is a critical issue that underscores the need for innovative solutions.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted critical challenges with our health care delivery system," says Sonia Pagliaroli, Chief Nursing Officer at Cerner Canada. "The single common thread in all of them is data. When we're dealing with a pandemic such as COVID-19, it's imperative that everyone have access to clinical data across all venues to protect our health care workers and provide the best care to patients."

For 40 years, Cerner has worked at the intersection of health care and information technology. It has sparked the creation of tools to support hospitals and health care systems. Its underlying philosophy is that data delivers insight, insight triggers action, and action produces outcomes. It's a fitting approach for addressing current challenges like information

integration, capacity, and volume management within health care systems.

"There was recognition that a centralized way of getting data was needed to manage COVID-19 issues like staffing and testing," says Michael Billanti, Director of Population Health at Cerner Canada. "It's all about open, interoperable sharing." Health and social information from multiple sources are needed for both research and supporting medical decisions. On a wider scale, findings should be applied across entire health care systems.

It's an effective strategy. Island Health, Vancouver Island's local health authority, uses Cerner technology as its single electronic health records (EHRs) across venues on the island including acute care, ambulatory care, primary care, long-term care, community health, and public health. The company's Cerner Millennium® and patient portal HealthLifeSM digital platforms were integral in providing one-stop access to vital information to health care providers and public health workers.

It's an approach that will continue not only through the COVID-19 recovery phase but beyond as health care shifts from a reactive to proactive focus. Data technology will help lead the way. ■

This article was sponsored by **Cerner**.

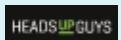


Immediate Action Needed to Prevent Male Suicides During COVID-19 Crisis

Dr. John Ogrodniczuk
Founder,
HeadsUpGuys

In this stressful period, which is unprecedented in our lifetime, it's critical that the public be made aware of free mental health resources. The last economic crisis in 2008 to 2009 saw a significant increase in male suicides, setting a frightening precedent that has clear implications for our current situation. Based out of the University of British Columbia, HeadsUpGuys is a leading global resource that tackles depression and suicide among men. Maintaining mental health during this time is going to require extra effort, but we can and will get through this together. For health strategies for managing and preventing depression, or to donate, visit headsupguys.org. ■

This article was supported by **HeadsUpGuys**.



Not All Hand Sanitizers Are Created Equal

Hand sanitizers have been essential in the battle against COVID-19 — and they're here to stay. Find the right sanitizer with these tips:

- 1 Look at the percentage of alcohol.** The most effective hand sanitizers consist of 60 to 85 percent alcohol by volume. Water content improves penetration and slows down evaporation.
- 2 Choose the right type of alcohol.** Ethanol is more effective than isopropanol alcohol (on its own) against viruses, is less toxic, and has less odor.
- 3 Opt for helpful extra ingredients.** Moisturizers like aloe and vitamin E help reduce the dry feeling of alcohol.

4 Ensure proper application.

1. Clean dirt and grease from hands.
2. Apply a dime-size amount to the palm of one hand.
3. Rub your hands together, covering all surfaces of both hands for at least 20 seconds until dry. Do not wipe off hand sanitizer before it dries. Allow it to dry on your hands. ■

For more information, visit zytecggermbuster.ca.

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Look for products approved by Health Canada. Check the label before purchasing.



This article was sponsored by **Citron Hygiene**.

How to Welcome Employees to a Safe and Healthy Workplace

Anne Pappmehl

After months of lockdown, businesses are eager to resume operations. “COVID-19 has heralded an unprecedented awareness around hygiene, and businesses are focused on reopening safely in the next few weeks,” says Peter Farrell, President and CEO of Citron Hygiene, an international hygiene services company with its head office in Markham, ON. Similarly, employees are concerned and want to know their workplaces are safe.

Historically, building design has focused on maximizing the number of employees in an office, and personal desks were replaced with “hotel”-type work stations. The new, post-COVID workplace requires that employers invest in increasing personal space and improving office hygiene.

Because the novel coronavirus can contaminate surfaces for up to 72 hours, a touch-free environment is key to employee safety. “The biggest challenge is knowing where to start. We partner with our customers through virtual meetings and facility surveys to make sure they’re set up for a successful return to work,” says Katy Baker, Citron Hygiene’s Director of Marketing.

Citron Hygiene’s service recommenda-



Peter Farrell
President & CEO,
Citron Hygiene



Alison Mahoney
Executive Vice
President Sales
& Marketing,
Citron Hygiene



Katy Baker
Director of
Marketing,
Citron Hygiene

tions include proper disposal of personal protective equipment, professional disinfection across all surfaces, and providing a completely touch-free washroom.

Along with these measures come educational signage, up-to-date COVID-19 information, and specially-trained hygiene consultants. “We’re ready and look forward to being a trusted advisor as Canadian businesses prepare to reopen,” says Alison Mahoney, Citron Hygiene’s Executive Vice President of Sales and Marketing. ■

Learn more about how Citron Hygiene can help your business become compliant with COVID-19 safety measures at citronhygiene.com or **1-800-643-6922**.

This article was sponsored by **ServiceMaster Clean**.



How to Keep Workplaces Clean After COVID-19 Closures



As municipalities are relaxing restrictions and allowing non-essential businesses to reopen, the main question on everyone’s mind is: what does the “new normal” look like on the other side of the lockdown?

Returning to work requires businesses to adopt protocols that limit the likelihood of virus transmission within their walls in order to protect the health and safety of workers. Some of these protocols include:

- 1** Physical distancing to maintain a two-metre distance from others. For those that have reopened or are about to, this means a rethink of how office meetings will be conducted and how collaborative spaces will be used.
- 2** Adjusting office layouts to ensure proper physical distancing.
- 3** Ensuring employees and visitors practise healthy hand hygiene.
- 4** Frequent cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch surfaces.
- 5** A declutter policy that may include depersonalizing work areas to allow cleaning staff full access to clean and disinfect properly.

Long-term solutions for healthy workplaces

Facility managers will need to work with their commercial cleaning suppliers to adopt new cleaning protocols to ensure the safety of workplace occupants. Cleaning

and disinfecting are more important than ever, but they’re only short-term solutions. The truth of the matter is that once a surface has been cleaned and disinfected, all that work can easily be undone by a passerby who re-contaminates the surface by simply touching it. Therefore, long-term protection is critical to keeping employees healthy and providing them with some peace of mind.

So, what do we mean by long-term protection? A cleaning plan that consists of cleaning, disinfecting, and a solution that inhibits microbial growth between cleaning and disinfecting services. These three steps work together to help ensure that surfaces — and workplaces — are clean 24/7. ■

ServiceMaster Clean Canada delivers janitorial, commercial carpet cleaning, and specialty cleaning services from coast to coast. To find out more, visit servicemasterclean.ca.



Gavin Bajin
National
Director,
ServiceMaster
Clean



Seek the Latest Advice From Your Health Care Professional Before Travelling

Michele Sponagle

After months of staying at home because of COVID-19, many Canadians are keen to start planning their future travels. While we're likely to see new protocols introduced by airlines like pre-boarding screening, contactless check-ins, and wearing masks in transit, the focus on staying healthy hasn't changed. It remains a priority — even more so as awareness around the spread of the disease has increased.

While there will always be some risk of exposure to disease with travel, the

key is to take preventative steps. “Unless you're going to live in a bubble and never leave your home, you're exposing yourself to risk,” says Ajit Johal,

a pharmacist and Clinical Director of Vancouver-based TravelRx. “That's not going to change. People will just have to find ways to mitigate it.”

Reduce risk by being prepared

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, Johal points out that people will want to be extra diligent once they start globe-trotting. “It's interesting because all government websites say, ‘See a health care provider before you take any trips abroad.’ Now that's going to happen much more,” he says. “Being prepared is not only crucial for travellers' health, but also for

our health care system at home. When people don't immunize themselves when they travel, they can become asymptomatic carriers and spread certain diseases at home when they return.”

Travellers taking international trips need to understand the importance of staying safe. “Over the last couple of years, I've seen more and more people electing to get vaccinated before they travel,” says Johal. “Vaccination is still the best public health intervention. I'm a huge proponent.”

That means making sure your immunizations are up to date and being diligent about general hygiene practices, from thorough handwashing — a skill many have perfected during the COVID-19 pandemic — to wiping down surfaces on airplanes and at hotels and restaurants with disinfectant. Johal also suggests travellers be careful about what they eat (boil it, cook it, peel it, or forget it) and about preventing insect bites, especially from mosquitoes, which can carry a range of diseases.

When it comes to planning a trip, choose destinations carefully as countries are still grappling with COVID-19. “Ideally, you'll want to ensure that where you're headed has low infection and death rates,” notes Dr. Brian Aw, Medical Director at the Ultimate Health Medical Centre in Richmond Hill, ON. “It's irresponsible to go somewhere where cases are rising. And you'll also need to be aware of — and respect — local quarantine laws.”

Stay safe abroad through immunization

Preparing for a trip also means minimizing the chances of having any kind of medical intervention abroad, which may increase your risk of being infected in a hospital or clinic, Dr. Aw notes. “Given that COVID-19 can give a traveller multiple symptoms including fever, cough, shortness of breath and diarrhea, you want to avoid any comorbidity that could cause you to have serious complications from the virus,” he explains. So before you go, he recommends getting your flu shot, getting the necessary vaccinations for the areas visited, and taking measures to prevent traveller's diarrhea, an illness that affects 30 to 50 percent of travellers during a two-week trip overseas. As well, people planning trips should consider other vaccines available and appropriate to their health status.

The good news is that we will travel again. As both experts agree, exploring the world is possible to do safely by adopting risk-mitigating measures. In the meantime, look to reputable sites for credible information and consult a health care professional at least four to six weeks prior to departure to get the best and most up-to-date advice on best practices for staying healthy at home and abroad. ■

This article was made possible with support from **Valneva**.

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