

## Exton, Adam (HC/SC)

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**Sent:** 2020-08-20 8:25 AM  
**To:** gphin / rmisp (PHAC/ASPC)  
**Subject:** GPHIN Daily Report (20 August 2020)  
**Attachments:** GPHIN Daily Report 20200820 MP.docx

Good morning,

Please find below the daily Summary and articles collected by GPHIN for your review and risk assessment.

### GPHIN Daily Report Email Summary

#### Special Section on Coronavirus

##### [Canada \(Update\) - Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) Outbreak \(Official\)](#)

As of 19 August 2020 at 19:00 EDT, a total of 123,490 cases have been recorded in Canada including 9,049 deaths. The cases are reported in Newfoundland and Labrador (268 confirmed cases, 3 deaths), Prince Edward Island (44 confirmed cases), Nova Scotia (1,076 confirmed cases, 64 deaths), New Brunswick (186 confirmed cases, 2 deaths), Quebec (61,316 confirmed cases, 5,729 deaths), Ontario (40,972 confirmed cases, 2,792 deaths), Manitoba (763 confirmed cases, 12 deaths), Saskatchewan (1,586 confirmed cases, 22 deaths), Alberta (12,501 confirmed cases, 227 deaths), British Columbia (4,745 confirmed cases, 198 deaths), Yukon (15 confirmed cases), Northwest Territories (5 confirmed cases), Nunavut (0 confirmed case), and repatriated travellers (13 confirmed cases). A detailed [epidemiological summary](#) is available. The risk will vary between and within communities, but given the increasing number of cases in Canada, the risk to Canadians is considered [high](#).

##### [International \(Update\) - Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) Outbreak \(Media\)](#)

As of 20 August 2020, 11:37 GMT, there were 22,611,341 cases of COVID-19 and 791,678 deaths reported globally. Top 10 countries with the highest number of cases, by alphabetical order are: Brazil (3,460,413 cases, 111,189 deaths); Chile (390,037 cases, 10,578 deaths); Colombia (502,178 cases, 15,979 deaths); India (2,841,400 cases, 54,017 deaths); Mexico (537,031 cases, 58,481 deaths); Peru (558,420 cases, 26,834 deaths); Russia (942,106 cases, 16,099 deaths); South Africa (596,060 cases, 12,423 deaths); Spain (387,985 cases, 28,797 deaths); United States (5,701,390 cases, 176,365 deaths).

#### Canada – Coronavirus disease (COVID -19) Outbreaks and Outcomes (Official and Media)

- [Ottawa Public Health \(OPH\) affirms it will be transparent with educators and parents of children who may have been exposed to a positive COVID-19 case at school](#), even when an outbreak has not been declared. During a teleconference on 18 August 2020, Ottawa's Medical Officer of Health noted that an outbreak would be declared when two people at a single school test positive and both cases are found to have a link to the school environment. The policy is in line with provincial draft guidelines. According to the official, all outbreaks at schools will be similarly reported to the public; however, if just one case is discovered at a school, a public health nurse will phone all potential contacts to notify them of next steps, and whether they require testing. Meanwhile, OPH reported the City's first COVID-19-related death this month, bringing the total number of fatalities since the pandemic began to 265. In addition, OPH reported two new outbreaks at long-term care homes in Ottawa after one staff member tested positive at Residence Saint-Louis, and another at Billingswood Manor. There are now five institutional outbreaks in Ottawa.
- [The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit is aware of a reported case of COVID-19 involving a worker at the south end Canadian Tire in Barrie](#). Few details are known, as an investigation had been launched to determine how the individual got the virus. Contact tracing is also underway. The case is not the one posted by the Health Unit on 18 August 2020, which involves a Barrie man who contracted the illness through a close contact.
- [A group of Dofasco employees in Hamilton, Ontario have been told to self-isolate after a worker on the galvanizing line tested positive for COVID-19](#). According to spokesperson, less than 10 workers were identified as potential close contacts of the case, who tested positive on 13 August 2020. The person last worked a shift on 09 August. The new infection brings Dofasco's total case count amid the pandemic to nine. Seven of the cases were employees and two were third-party contractors. None of the cases were connected to each other. One

case, a worker in the material handling and logistics unit, tested positive for COVID-19 after an autopsy examination.

- On 19 August 2020, [Ontario reported 102 new cases of COVID-19 one day after the Province saw its highest daily increase of the month](#). On 18 August, Ontario reported 125 new cases of the illness, the highest on any single day since the end of July. On 19 August, 30 of Ontario's 34 Public Health Units reported five or fewer cases, while 17 reported no new cases at all. Meanwhile in Toronto, the city's Public Health Agency reported that a patron at a strip club has tested positive for COVID-19, following an earlier announcement that an employee there had the coronavirus. Toronto Public Health has attempted to contact all of the approximately 550 people who may have been exposed to the Brass Rail employee who tested positive. The patron, who tested positive, is from a region outside Toronto, and officials are in touch with the corresponding health unit. The case remains under investigation and local public health authorities will be following up with the individual to request information on all possible sources of investigation. The Agency is asking anyone who attended the Brass Rail Tavern from 04-08 August to monitor themselves for COVID-19 symptoms. Toronto Public Health indicates that the strip club is now following pandemic operating guidelines, after an initial investigation found the venue was not following rules. The Agency notes it is completing routine inspections of adult entertainment venues throughout the city.
- [Health Minister declared on 18 August 2020 that each long-term care home in Quebec would have a single person responsible and accountable for its response to COVID-19](#), as he moved to shore up the vulnerable sector ahead of a potential second wave of the novel coronavirus. According to the Health Minister, health-care staff will also be prevented from working in more than one seniors centre and unknowingly carrying the virus into multiple facilities. Many of the measures to be implemented by the end of September are aimed at avoiding a second disaster in the long-term care sector. A key component of the plan is to name a manager who will lead each of the province's roughly 400 long-term care homes. The new managers, who will each be assisted by an infection-control specialist, will be responsible for ensuring government directives are followed.
- On 19 August 2020, [Canada's Chief Public Health Officer \(CPHO\) explained how building up health measures and implementing public health measures has helped economic and social spaces to reopen with reduced exposure and reduced risk of infection and spreading the coronavirus](#). The reopening, including returning to schools, will happen in modified spaces, adapted routines, and with mitigation protocols that are an integral part of authorities' approach to keep the COVID-19 infection rate down. The CPHO stressed resilience among Canada's children, while getting back to the school in a modified learning environment. In addition, the official has acknowledged another group of resilience builders, while addressing the World Humanitarian Day, noting that throughout the COVID-19 crisis, humanitarians have been working to protect those at high risk of COVID-19 and build resilience in communities across Canada and around the world.
- [The University of Toronto has launched a Pandemic Institute to help shape government responses to the COVID-19 crisis](#). The University reported that the Institute would focus on working with public health workforces to help with pandemic preparation and recovery. The institute will also help with Canada's capacity to model infectious diseases. The academic body will study how the pandemic has worsened inequality between the rich and poor around the world. According to the Dean, academics have the freedom to move faster than governments and are politically neutral, allowing them to help respond quickly to emerging threats. The Institute for Pandemics was launched after a \$1 million donation.
- Canadian doctors indicate they may have no choice, but to test everyone with respiratory symptoms this coming fall as students and parents gear up to go back to school in a few short weeks. [Family doctors across the country, worried about the daunting unknowns in the weeks and months ahead, are asking for clear guidance from public health officials](#) as their offices prepare for the potential onslaught of cold and flu season during what is expected to be another wave of coronavirus infections. Part of the concern is over protocol and process, but also access to care for patients should family practices and clinics need to close because of an outbreak. Doctors with the Canadian Medical Association (CMA) affirm they are hearing a lot of concerned physicians asking questions about how to tackle the next few months and believe a plan is necessary. Doctors' questions include whether patients exhibiting respiratory symptoms should be sent straight to COVID testing centres. Whether they should be triaged differently. How to procedure with certain symptoms, and what doctors should do if they or their own children get sick. Hospital staff are generally expected to get tested every week, but there are currently no guidelines on how often asymptomatic health-care workers should be tested. Meanwhile, some doctors affirm masks, gloves, and gowns are still in short supply.

#### **United States - Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) - Communication Resources (Official and Media)**

- On 19 August 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated its guideline on [COVID-19 in Newly Resettled Refugee Populations](#). Refugees to the United States, especially those who are recently resettled, may be in living or working conditions that put them at risk of getting COVID-19. Some refugees also have limited access to health care, as well as certain underlying medical conditions that put them at higher risk of more severe illness from COVID-19, compared to the rest of the U.S. population. Refugees are eligible for U.S. government-funded resettlement help, including healthcare benefits such as short-term health insurance for up to 8 months after arrival, and a medical exam within 90 days of arrival.

- On 18 August 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated [its COVID-19 Employer Information for Rail Transit Operators](#). As a rail transit operator employer, their workforce might come into contact with the virus when in [close contact](#) (within about 6 feet) with other people at the worksite, which can include passengers, coworkers, transit station, and maintenance workers, or touching or handling high-contact surfaces and equipment, and then touching their face, mouth, nose, or eyes. Recommendations on how staff and others can be protected and slow the spread of the disease is provided.
- On 18 August 2020, [U.S. Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\)](#) announced that it is providing two new flowcharts and supporting information on respirators: For health care providers and facilities: [Considerations for Selecting Respirators for Your Health Care Facility](#); For manufacturers and distributors: [Manufacturing and Distributing Respirators for Health Care Use in the United States Under an Existing Emergency Use Authorization \(EUA\) During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#).
- The FDA has updated its [COVID-19 Resources for Health Professionals](#) page to include the [CURE ID app](#). CURE ID allows clinicians to quickly and easily share their experiences treating COVID-19 patients and patients with other difficult-to-treat infectious diseases.
- On 19 August 2020, the FDA issued the third Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for a COVID-19 antigen test. An antigen test is a diagnostic test that quickly detects fragments of proteins found on or within the virus by testing samples collected from the patient's nasal cavity using swabs. The EUA was issued for LumiraDX UK Ltd.'s [LumiraDx SARS-CoV-2 Ag Test](#), and authorized the test for use in high and moderate complexity laboratories certified Under the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments (CLIA), as well as at the point-of-care operating under a CLIA Certificate of Waiver, Certificate of Compliance, or Certificate of Accreditation.
- The FDA posted frequently asked questions for consumers about [UV lights and lamps](#). Consumers may be interested in purchasing ultraviolet-C (UVC) lamps to disinfect in the home or similar spaces. The FDA is providing answers to consumers' questions about the use of these lamps for disinfection during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- According to two senior administration officials, [the emergency approval of blood plasma as a potential COVID-19 treatment by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has now been put on hold](#). A group of Federal health officials have argued that the emerging data on the treatment was too weak, adding that an emergency approval could still be granted in the near future. The authorization is on hold for now as more data is reviewed.
- On 19 August 2020, [Director of Communications of Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security](#) shared with [media](#) the [Interim Framework for COVID-19 Vaccine Allocation and Distribution in the United States](#). The new report, providing an ethical framework for making decisions about allocation and distribution of a COVID-19 vaccine during the initial period when such a vaccine has first been authorized for use and is still in limited supply. The purpose of this report is to offer an additional ethics framework for use in making decisions about allocation of SARS-CoV-2 vaccine during this initial period of scarcity in the United States and make related suggestions about vaccine distribution. The approach takes into account considerations of medical risk, public health, ethics and equity, economic impact, and logistics. The authors note where their approach aligns or differs from the 2018 CDC guidance for vaccine allocation in a severe influenza pandemic, which is the most recent pandemic vaccine guidance from the US government. This report is the product of deliberations of a multi-disciplinary team of public health experts at Johns Hopkins University including members from several centers and institutes. The deliberations were informed by a review of available literature and open source government documents.
- On 19 August 2020, [White House indicated the COVID-19 vaccine application would not be mandatory in U.S.](#) According to an Epidemiological Physician and White House Adviser, when a coronavirus vaccine exists, its application will not be forced by the federal government in the United States, although it may be mandatory by local standards for children. The White House Advisor highlighted that health authorities cannot force or try to force people to get vaccinated, as they have never done it.
- On 19 August 2020, the American Academy of Pediatrics on 19 August updated its [COVID-19 Planning Considerations: Guidance for School Re-entry](#). The purpose of this guidance revision is to continue to support communities, local leadership in education and public health, and pediatricians collaborating with schools in creating policies for school re-entry during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic that foster the overall health of children, adolescents, educators, staff, and communities and are based on available evidence.

#### **[WHO - Timeline: WHO's COVID-19 response \(Official\)](#)**

WHO has recently posted its interactive COVID-19 response timeline. According to WHO, the timeline uses data from WHO's [COVID-19 Dashboard](#) on cases reported by countries, territories and areas to WHO. Text for listings has been taken from the [Timeline of WHO's response to COVID-19](#). Caution must be taken when interpreting all data presented, and differences between information products published by WHO, such as the [WHO COVID-19 Situation Reports](#), national public health authorities, and other sources using different inclusion criteria and different data cut-off times are to be expected. While steps are taken to ensure accuracy and reliability, all data are subject to continuous verification and change. All counts are subject to variations in case detection, definitions, laboratory testing, and reporting strategies between countries, states and territories. The data included was last updated on 23 July 2020.

### **[WHO - Considerations for quarantine of contacts of COVID-19 cases \(Official\)](#)**

On 19 August 2020, the WHO published an interim guidance concerning considerations for quarantine of contacts of COVID-19 cases. The purpose of this document is to offer guidance to Member States on quarantine measures for individuals in the context of COVID-19. The guidance is intended for those responsible for establishing local or national policy for quarantine of individuals, and adherence to infection prevention and control measures.

### **IHR Announcement - COVID-19 / Member States Information Session on Thursday 20 August 2020**

On 20 August 2020, WHO posted on the Event Information Site for IHR National Focal Points, the connection details for the information session regarding the COVID-19 outbreak scheduled for Thursday 20 August 2020 (Member States and Missions briefing) from 12:30-14.30 CET.

### **[PAHO - Countries must expand services to cope with mental health effects of COVID-19 pandemic, PAHO Director says \(Official\)](#)**

On 18 August 2020, Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) Director indicated that countries in the Americas should expand and invest in mental health services to cope with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to PAHO's Director, it is urgent that mental health support is considered a critical component of the pandemic response. The pandemic is having a serious impact on health workers, who are working longer hours than ever before and risking their own lives as hospitals struggle to maintain sufficient Personal Protective Equipment. Mental health support services must be accessible and integrated at the local level; authorities need innovations to reach and support survivors, and it is paramount to fight stigma. PAHO has been helping countries to strengthen policies and services and expand online learning for health workers so they know how to identify and support survivors of violence during the pandemic. Patients who have tested positive for COVID-19 also experience insomnia, delirium or even depression. Initial research indicates that as much as a third of patients recovering from COVID-19 can have enduring changes in their mood and suffer from anxiety or depression.

### **[ECDC - Population-wide testing of SARS-CoV-2: country experiences and potential approaches in the EU/EEA and the United Kingdom \(Official\)](#)**

Different population-wide testing approaches have already been used in various countries, including household testing, individual testing and the testing of incoming travellers, irrespective of whether or not they are displaying symptoms. On 19 August 2020, ECDC posted [a document](#) that summarises country experiences and perspectives relating to the objective and application of different population-wide testing approaches and discusses the options in the context of the EU/EEA and the UK. The testing of all individuals in a specific setting as part of an outbreak investigation (e.g. related to an occupational setting) or a research study are not considered to be population-wide testing in the context of this document. Details on the screening of particular targeted populations are also not included in this document. Factors that need to be considered prior to implementation of any population-wide testing strategy which is to include all individuals are the epidemiological situation, costs, logistics, technical feasibility, resource availability, contact tracing capabilities, barriers to testing, potential false positivity and timely notification. Population-wide testing strategies can complement other public health measures and are more effective when paired with case isolation and contact tracing.

### **International - Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) Outbreak and Outcomes (Official and Media)**

- [A Florida school district has sent more than 300 students and teachers into quarantine after discovering possible coronavirus cases in classrooms, just one week after opening for in-person learning.](#) The Martin County School District, located north of Palm Beach, began its school year 11 August 2020. In a school board meeting, officials revealed the numbers of students and teachers currently in quarantine. The most recently available data, as of 17 August 2020, shows that 292 students and 14 teachers from at least five Martin County schools were in quarantine for possible coronavirus infection, officials reported. The district announced at around 7 p.m. on 18 August that 29 additional students from one of the high schools must immediately enter quarantine and transition to remote learning.
- On 19 August 2020, the Hellenic Civil Aviation Authority (HCCA) announced [Greece's government has decided to extend the entry ban for internationals outside the European Union](#) until 31 August. According to the Greece authorities, the decision was taken in a bid to stop the spread of COVID-19. However, citizens of the following 11 countries are exempted from the ban: Australia, Georgia, Canada, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea, Rwanda, Thailand, Uruguay, the United Arab Emirates and Tunisia.
- [Brazil reported for the first time in four months that coronavirus transmission is under control, according to calculations by Imperial College's epidemic control center.](#) For the week that began on 16 August 2020, the contagion rate has been calculated at 0.98, this rate points to how many people each infected person on average transmits the pathogen. This means that every 100 people infected with the novel coronavirus spread the pathogen to 98 others, which in turn spread the pathogen to 96, which in turn spread the pathogen to 94, slowing down the spread.

- In the UK, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) reports that [just 28 per cent of positive COVID-19 cases state they had symptoms at the time of their swab test or at preceding or subsequent tests](#). The remaining 72 per cent of positive cases either did not report having any of the specific or general symptoms or did not answer the questions. According to ONS, this suggests there is a potentially large number of asymptomatic cases, but it is important to note that symptoms were self-reported rather than professionally diagnosed. Symptoms people were asked to report included fever, muscle ache, fatigue, sore throat, cough, shortness of breath, headache, nausea or vomiting, abdominal pain, diarrhoea, loss of taste with loss of smell. The ONS stressed its analysis was based on 165 people who had tested positive and any false positives could have an effect on the results.
- [COVID-19 has been found at three more mink farms across the Netherlands, taking the total number of such infected farms in the country to 36](#). According to the Dutch news website, more than 1.6 million infected mink have been killed to stop the spread of the virus, which represents 30 percent of all animals kept on the Netherlands' 128 mink farms. The first outbreak at a Dutch mink farm was detected in April in North Brabant. In May, the Ministry of Agriculture confirmed the first two cases and so far the only ones of a mink infecting a human with the coronavirus. The government responded by launching a policy of animal culling at infected farms and long-term isolation at non-infected farms. In parallel, monitoring and strict sanitary protocols have been put in place.

### Studies Related to Coronavirus disease (COVID -19) Outbreak (Official and Media)

- [A recent case study is providing insight into who is potentially at risk of contracting COVID-19 on an airplane if there are infectious individuals onboard, and how seating position and airflow could play a role](#). Released on 18 August 2020, as a case series in [The Journal of the American Medical Association \(JAMA\)](#), the research looked specifically at one commercial airline flight from Tel Aviv, Israel, to Frankfurt, Germany, on 09 March 2020. Among 102 passengers on a Boeing 737-900 aircraft were 24 members of a tourist group. Researchers believe at least two individuals contracted COVID-19 from other passengers on the flight. The research stated that both passengers with likely onboard transmission were seated within two rows of an index case. Starting 7 days earlier, the group had contact with a hotel manager who later received a diagnosis of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). Seven people from the tourist group tested positive for COVID-19 during that first throat swab at the airport, making them the “index cases”. No member of the group had received a diagnosis of COVID-19 before the flight, and no measures to prevent transmission (eg, wearing of masks) had been applied. The flight duration was 4 hours 40 minutes. Researchers note that their findings do not rule out airborne transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in an airplane cabin. The authors stress the number of people who have actually contracted COVID-19 on an airplane is believed to be relatively small so far considering that individuals with COVID-19 are still taking flights into Canada and between provinces. Eighteen of the flights arriving to Canada from international destinations since the start of August alone had people on board with COVID-19. A study published in late July also showed that those travelling on a train are at risk for contracting COVID-19, and that the most dangerous seats are those directly across from or beside an infected person.
- Researchers have reported that [three crew of a Seattle fishing boat, who were found to have antibodies able to neutralise the new coronavirus, remained uninfected in an outbreak that swept through the ship, sickening most people on board](#). The small study is among the first studies in humans to suggest a link between neutralising antibodies and protection from infection. Researchers screened 120 of 122 people before they boarded the American Dynasty fishing vessel in May, testing both for active virus and for antibodies in the blood that would indicate a previous or ongoing infection. None of the crew tested positive for the virus, but six had some antibodies and of those, three had evidence of neutralising antibodies. More than two weeks after the boat set sail, it returned to shore with an infected crewmember who needed hospital treatment. Researchers then tested all the crew over several weeks and found that 85 per cent 104 crewmembers were infected. However, none of the three with neutralising antibodies tested positive, nor did they report any symptoms during the outbreak. The authors indicated that the presence of neutralising antibodies from prior infection was significantly associated with protection against reinfection. The research does not necessarily show people cannot be infected with COVID-19 twice. Scientists have not been able to run direct human tests to find out about the protection conferred by neutralising antibodies, because of ethical concerns over potential severity and long-term impacts of the virus. In a commentary on the study, an expert suggests that individuals, who have had a prior exposure to virus, are susceptible to reinfection unless they have appreciable levels of neutralising antibodies. This gives an important insight into the type of immunity that might protect from future infection, but it does not show whether past exposure can protect against severe infection in people who do not develop neutralising antibodies.
- [A nationwide effort led by Public Health England \(PHE\) to find out whether people who had COVID-19 can get infected again has now recruited 10,000 health workers](#) from across the National Health Services. The health workers have now signed up to take part in PHE's 'SIREN' (SARS-CoV-2 Immunity & REinfection EvaluationN) study, which is exploring whether specific COVID-19 antibodies provide immunity. Scientists do not yet know if people who have been infected in the past are protected from becoming sick again, or how long any protection lasts. The study will follow participants for at least 12 months, with regular blood and swab tests and will explore how factors like ethnicity, age or gender affect the chances of infection and the extent of any immunity.

Preliminary results are expected before the winter. All four nations from across the UK will eventually be involved. Recruitment in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is due to begin in the coming weeks.

- American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) persons appear to be disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic; however, limited data are available to quantify the disparity in COVID-19 incidence, severity, and outcomes among AI/AN persons compared with those among other racial/ethnic groups. According to a study published on 19 August 2020 in the [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#), in 23 states with adequate race/ethnicity data, the cumulative incidence of laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 among AI/AN persons was 3.5 times that among non-Hispanic white persons. A large percentage of missing data precluded analysis of some characteristics and outcomes. The findings show that adequate health care and public health infrastructure resources are needed to support a culturally responsive public health effort that sustains the strengths of AI/AN communities. These resources would facilitate the collection and reporting of more complete case report data to support evidence-based public health efforts.
- According to study data published in *Infection Control & Hospital Epidemiology*, [some decontamination methods, specifically, methods using high concentrations of gas plasma hydrogen peroxide, can substantially damage N95 masks after only one process](#). For their study, Associate Professor of Environmental Health Sciences at the University of Massachusetts and colleagues obtained N95 respirators (mostly 3M brand 1860 or 1860S models) from hospitals that were using various decontamination techniques. The study demonstrated that decontamination methods including ultraviolet light treatments are safe for respirator treatment for several repeated cycles. However, after nine cleanings, the masks begin to fail. Some methods that use high-concentration gas plasma hydrogen peroxide a "very harsh decontamination method" can damage the respirators immediately.
- [Researchers from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston have developed the iMASC, a new silicone mask that can be safely reused without fear of contamination](#). In a study about the iMASC published in the *British Medical Journal Open*, researchers stated that shortages of personal protective equipment, or PPE, in hospitals created a "critical need" for reusable safety gear. The masks are based on the shape of a typical N95 mask, too, but they are made with a silicone rubber that can be sterilized after each use.
- A study, published on 18 August 2020 in *JAMA*, shows [COVID-19 antibody levels vary widely in recovered patients](#). Researchers from Fudan University in Shanghai, China, measured antibody levels in COVID-19 patients released from Shanghai Public Health Clinical Center after being hospitalized from 24 January to 26 February 2020. Of the 175 patients, 165 (94%) had significantly higher levels of COVID-19 antibodies than 13 uninfected controls in the convalescent phase of infection. Antibody levels were medium-low in 29 patients (17%), medium-high in 69 patients (39%), and high in 25 patients (14%).
- [Cuba will start testing its own COVID-19 vaccine candidate next week, according to the official Cuban registry of clinical trials](#). If the results are good, the process can continue to a phase II trial to determine if the medication works. State-run Finlay Institute of Vaccines, is producing the vaccine Soberana 01, and will be tested during a phase I and II trial involving 676 adults between 19 and 80 years old. It is unclear if a late-stage, phase III trial, usually involving thousands of people to test a vaccine's effectiveness and safety in a larger population, will follow. According to the data published on the register, the Cuban study will assess both safety and the resulting immune response.
- [The John Theurer Cancer Center \(JTCC\) at Hackensack University Medical Center doctors assessed off-label use of tocilizumab, an anti-inflammatory monoclonal antibody](#), a drug normally used in rheumatoid arthritis and cancer treatments, improves hospital survival in critically-ill patients admitted to the intensive care unit (ICU). The findings were published in *The Lancet Rheumatology* on 14 August 2020. The findings showed a statistically significant decrease in hospital-related deaths among the patients who received the tocilizumab, an anti-inflammatory monoclonal antibody. As result, a 36 percent decrease in hospital-related mortality among the ICU patients who received the drug, as compared with patients in the ICU who did not receive it.

## Domestic Events of Interest

### [Ontario - Feds funding 2 safe drug supply sites in Toronto amid worsening opioid overdose crisis \(Media\)](#)

On 19 August 2020, the federal government is set to announce funding for two new safe drug supply programs in Toronto, a move that comes amid a worsening opioid overdose crisis that has left dozens dead across the city this year alone. According to a news release from federal officials, the Emergency Safer Supply Program and the Downtown East Collaborative Emergency Safer Supply Program are "innovative new harm reduction approaches" based in Toronto.

### [Ontario - 2020 sees large swath of London and Middlesex listed as Lyme disease risk area \(Media\)](#)

The Middlesex-London Health Unit (MLHU) affirms a massive yearly increase in the presence of blacklegged ticks resulted in a large portion of the region being added to the Ontario's Lyme disease risk area map. According to the Health Unit, the number of blacklegged ticks, also known as deer ticks, observed in the region has ballooned nearly eightfold in

three years from 12 in 2018 to 95 in 2020. The number is based on blacklegged ticks submitted to the health unit and those found by “dragging,” which is a surveillance measure involving dragging a white flannel cloth over and around vegetation where ticks may be present. In 2019, the region covered by the MLHU was not listed as a hot spot on Public Health Ontario’s annual Lyme disease estimated risk areas map, but a yellow circle now covers much of the region on the province’s 2020 map.

### **[Ontario - Vaccine clinics offered after hep A cases in Burk's Falls, Sundridge and South River \(Media\)](#)**

The North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit is holding vaccine clinics, after an increase in the number of cases of hepatitis A in the South River, Sundridge and Burk’s Falls areas. Usually, the district sees three cases every five years but since January there have been six. The health unit has not identified any links among the cases in the area. The North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit will be holding two vaccine clinics, one in South River on 26 August 2020 and one in Burk’s Falls on 31 August 2020.

## **International Events of Interest**

### **[United States \(Update\) - Outbreak of \*Salmonella\* Newport Infections Linked to Onions \(Official and Media\)](#)**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), public health and regulatory officials in several states, [Canada](#), and the [U.S. Food and Drug Administration](#) (FDA) are investigating a multistate outbreak of *Salmonella* Newport infections linked to onions. On 18 August 2020, CDC posted an update! Since the last case count update on 07 August 2020, an additional 229 ill people have been reported in this outbreak, including 9 from 4 new states: Arkansas, Hawaii, Rhode Island, and Texas. In total, 869 people infected with the outbreak strain of *Salmonella* Newport have been reported from 47 states (only Oklahoma, Louisiana, and Vermont have not had cases). In addition, 116 hospitalizations have been reported. No deaths have been reported. Epidemiologic and traceback information showed that red onions are a likely source of this outbreak. Due to the way onions are grown and harvested, other onion types, such as, white, yellow, or sweet yellow, may also be contaminated. On 18 August, the [FDA reported that it is analyzing samples collected at Thomson International of Bakersfield, California, which has recalled all red, white, yellow and sweet yellow onions shipped to all 50 states and the District of Columbia from 1 May to 1 August](#). This investigation is ongoing. CDC will provide more information as it becomes available.

### **[United States - Health officials link \*Salmonella\* outbreak to fresh peaches \(Media\)](#)**

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and several other states are investigating a multi-state outbreak of *Salmonella* Enteritidis infections linked to consumption of fresh, whole peaches supplied by Wawona Packing Company. Overall, 68 cases of *Salmonella* Enteritidis infection have been identified in nine states, 23 of those cases in Minnesota alone. The investigation is ongoing and more cases may be detected.

### **[WHO - World Humanitarian Day 2020: A tribute to aid workers on the front lines \(Official\)](#)**

Amid a global pandemic, unprecedented needs and growing insecurity, aid workers and health-care responders are staying and delivering to the world’s most vulnerable people. On 19 August 2020, World Humanitarian Day, the world honours all humanitarians who are going to extraordinary lengths in unique times to help people whose lives are suspended by crises and the global COVID-19 pandemic. WHO news release shows that in recent weeks alone, despicable attacks have killed aid workers in Niger and Cameroon, and since the onset of the pandemic, scores of health workers have come under attack across the world. According to Humanitarian Outcomes’ Aid Worker Security Database, major attacks against humanitarians last year surpassed all previous years on record. A total of 483 relief workers were attacked, 125 killed, 234 wounded and 124 kidnapped in 277 separate incidents. This is an 18 per cent increase in the number of victims compared to 2018. This year’s World Humanitarian Day comes as the world fights the COVID-19 pandemic. To pay tribute to the efforts of humanitarians, OCHA and its partners present the personal stories of some of the #RealLifeHeroes who are stepping up to meet the challenges, particularly local humanitarian workers.

### **[Europe - Increase in African swine fever cases in some pig facilities in eastern Europe \(Media\)](#)**

The number of cases of African swine fever in Europe is on the rise after large-scale outbreaks of the disease were found in eastern European pig facilities. A report from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in the UK stated that Poland has reported 19 outbreaks in domestic pig herds. According to the Pig Progress report (July 2020), African swine fever is present across one third of the Polish land area. Russia reportedly announced a fourfold increase in cases in July, having gone from just six confirmed cases to 25. Romania currently has by far the largest number of cases, with 395 confirmed cases of African swine fever thus far in 2020. Russia is next on the list.

## **Researches, Policies and Guidelines**

### **[United States - HHS Expands Access to Childhood Vaccines during COVID-19 Pandemic \(Official\)](#)**

On 19 August 2020, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued a [third amendment](#) to the Declaration under the Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness Act (PREP Act) to increase access to lifesaving

childhood vaccines and decrease the risk of vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks as children across the United States return to daycare, preschool and school. The amendment authorizes State-licensed pharmacists (and pharmacy interns acting under their supervision to administer vaccines, if the pharmacy intern is licensed or registered by his or her State board of pharmacy) to order and administer vaccines to individuals ages three through 18 years, subject to several requirements provided. HHS is expanding access to childhood vaccines to avoid preventable diseases in children, additional strains on the healthcare system, and any further increase in avoidable adverse health consequences, particularly if such complications coincide with an additional resurgence of COVID-19.

### **[Multiple Countries - Coronavirus Could Result in 1.5 Million Unsafe Abortions Worldwide, Report Finds \(Study\)](#)**

According to new estimates, consequences of the novel coronavirus pandemic could force at least 1.5 million more women to seek unsafe abortions worldwide. The figure appeared in a report published on 18 August 2020 by Marie Stopes International (MSI), a global reproductive care organization that provides contraception and safe abortions to women in 37 countries. As lockdown measures implemented in response to COVID-19 made accessing the organization's usual services more difficult, almost 2 million women and girls were left without options for legitimate reproductive care. Data included in MSI's report suggested that lost services between January and June could lead to as many as 900,000 unintended pregnancies and 3,100 pregnancy-related deaths across the world, in addition to unsafe abortions. Those numbers compound the incidences of each circumstance that existed prior to the global health crisis, and only account for barriers to accessing MSI's programs. Women in India felt the most significant impacts of lost services previously offered by MSI. The pandemic has affected a number of leading reproductive care organizations. Planned Parenthood, the largest reproductive health care provider in the United States, shifted many of its services to prioritize remote consultations as clinics closed earlier in 2020. Some Planned Parenthood sites cut hours or suspended walk-in appointments as the national outbreak persisted, while others closed entirely and began referring patients to different locations or providers instead. The organization outlines procedures still offered and shares resources about how and where to receive contraception and safe abortion services in guidance shared to its website.

### **[United States - FDA Releases NARMS Strategic Plan, Announces October 2020 NARMS Virtual Public Meeting \(Official\)](#)**

On 18 August 2020, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, in cooperation with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service (USDA-FSIS), its partners in the National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System (NARMS), is releasing the [NARMS Strategic Plan: 2021-2025](#). The NARMS program examines bacteria isolated from humans (through CDC data), raw retail meats (through FDA data), and animals at slaughter (through USDA-FSIS data) to analyze and report on patterns of resistance to the most important antimicrobial agents. Additionally, FDA is announcing that registration is now open for the 2020 Public Meeting of the National Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring System, which will be held virtually on 13 and 14 October 2020. The purpose of the NARMS Public Meeting 2020 is to share the NARMS Strategic Plan: 2021-2025 with stakeholders and to encourage discussion. The NARMS Strategic Plan: 2021-2025 lists the program's strategic goals and objectives, as well as its challenges and opportunities. A central theme of the new NARMS Strategic Plan is [One Health](#). The NARMS Strategic Plan: 2021-2025 is a roadmap for NARMS activities over the next five years.

### **[Japan - Combo therapy may prevent blood vessel complications in children with Kawasaki disease \(Study\)](#)**

According to new research published in the [Journal of the American Heart Association](#), adding corticosteroids to standard intravenous (IV) immunoglobulin treatment for children with Kawasaki disease judged to be at higher risk of developing blood vessel complications made initial treatment more successful and prevented these complications. According to the lead author, early diagnosis and prompt treatment are important for children with Kawasaki disease to prevent the development of cardiac complications. Standard treatment for Kawasaki disease includes IV immunoglobulin with aspirin. However, for an estimated 17% of Kawasaki disease patients, initial IV immunoglobulin treatment is not effective, increasing their risk of cardiac complications. In this study, the largest of its kind to-date, researchers analyzed real-world data on children with Kawasaki disease in Japan to determine whether the more intensive combination approach could heal children faster and prevent cardiac complications among those considered more vulnerable to treatment failure and long-term complications. Patients were deemed at higher risk if initial treatment was predicted to be ineffective based on standing scoring systems, if the child was less than one year old or had elevated blood test results. Compared with standard IV immunoglobulin treatment, the researchers found that initial combination treatment (immunoglobulin plus aspirin, and corticosteroids) reduced the need for a second course of therapy by 35%; initial combination treatment reduced the risk of coronary artery abnormalities by 47%. Delivering a low-dosage of corticosteroids over many days was more beneficial than a high-dose pulse over fewer days or typically just one day. According to the authors, clinicians should consider initial combination treatment with multiple-dose corticosteroids for high-risk Kawasaki disease patients. The same combination treatment of immunoglobulin and corticosteroids has been recently used to treat children with multisystem inflammatory syndrome (MIS-C), a new condition associated with COVID-19 infection that has some symptoms like Kawasaki disease. While MIS-C is seen in children with COVID-19, it is considered rare.

### **[China - New Chinese Viral Encephalitis Vaccine Shows Dual Protection \(Study\)](#)**



Researchers from the Wuhan Institute of Virology under the Chinese academy of Sciences announced that they have developed a new encephalitis vaccine, and laboratory tests suggest the vaccine can protect against two lethal mosquito-borne diseases with just one dose. The inoculation candidate can target both Japanese encephalitis virus (JEV) and West Nile virus (WNV). The study was published earlier in [npj Vaccines](#), shows the vaccine induced robust immune responses in mice, exhibiting high levels of safety and efficacy. JEV is the leading cause of viral encephalitis in the Asia-Pacific area, causing nearly 68,000 cases of Japanese encephalitis each year with the case fatality rates averaging around 30 percent. Even those who survive the disease often suffer from permanent neuronal disorders such as cognitive, motor and behavioral impairments. No effective antiviral therapeutics against JEV are available, and vaccines are therefore the only effective approach to prevent JEV infection. However, current JEV vaccines require repeated doses to achieve adequate protection. WNV can cause severe diseases in elderly and weak individuals. Since its emergence in New York in 1999, the virus has been reported in many other regions, including Africa, Europe and West Asia.

#### **United States - Study reveals how opioid use can trigger deafness (Study)**

New research, published in the [Journal of Medical Toxicology](#), [reviewed records of 20 years from the New Jersey Poison Control Centre from 1999 to 2018 to determine the association between opioid use and degrees of hearing loss](#). The research team from Rutgers University (RU) in the US identified 41 people with opioid exposure who experienced full or partial hearing loss or tinnitus, likely caused by toxicity to the ear. According to the study, more than half had used heroin, followed by oxycodone, methadone and tramadol; 88 per cent had only one known exposure. The findings showed that most people reported the condition affecting both ears. While some people may regain their hearing, the loss could be permanent with others. The study supports what has been found in animal studies, which is that any opioid can cause hearing loss.

Best Regards | Sincères salutations  
The GPHIN Team / L'équipe du RMISP

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