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Sent: 2020-09-17 8:32 AM
To: gphin / rmisp (PHAC/ASPC)
Subject: GPHIN Daily Report (17 September 2020)
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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 16 September 2020 at 19:00 EDT, a total of 139,747 cases have been recorded in Canada including 9,193 deaths. The cases are reported in Newfoundland and Labrador (271 confirmed cases, 3 deaths), Prince Edward Island (57 confirmed cases), Nova Scotia (1,086 confirmed cases, 65 deaths), New Brunswick (194 confirmed cases, 2 deaths), Quebec (65,857 confirmed cases, 5,788 deaths), Ontario (45,383 confirmed cases, 2,822 deaths), Manitoba (1,489 confirmed cases, 16 deaths), Saskatchewan (1,751 confirmed cases, 24 deaths), Alberta (16,128 confirmed cases, 254 deaths), British Columbia (7,498 confirmed cases, 219 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 17 September 2020, 11:28 GMT, there were 30,074,612 cases of COVID-19 and 945,818 deaths reported globally. Top 10 countries with the highest number of cases, by alphabetical order are: Argentina (589,012 cases, 12,116 deaths), Brazil (4,421,686 cases, 134,174 deaths); Colombia (736,377 cases, 23,478 deaths); India (5,122,846 cases, 83,257 deaths); Mexico (680,931 cases, 71,978 deaths); Peru (744,400 cases, 31,051 deaths); Russia (1,085,281 cases, 19,061 deaths); South Africa (653,444 cases, 15,705 deaths); Spain (614,360 cases, 30,243 deaths); United States (6,828,698 cases, 201,366 deaths).

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

- On 16 September 2020, [the Prime Minister shared the details of the investments that will be made through the Safe Restart Agreement](#). It will provide continued support to Canadians, as we safely restart economy and build a more resilient Canada. The Safe Restart Agreement supports measures to increase testing and contact tracing to protect Canadians from future waves of the virus. It will also provide municipalities with funding so they can quickly deliver essential services, like public transit and secure a reliable source of personal protective equipment for essential workers. The Agreement will also provide direct support to Canadian workers, including safe child care to help parents returning to work. It will also provide income support for people without paid sick leave, and takes steps to protect the most vulnerable, like Canada's seniors.
- [The priorities for the federal government have shifted as a result of rising COVID-19 cases across the country](#). This comes as the federal cabinet retreat wraps up on 16 September. The ambitious plan for economic recovery has been put on the back burner at this retreat as ministers try to figure out the best way to deal with a potential second wave of COVID-19. The aim is to prevent a major surge and another shutdown of the economy, likely indicating a change in focus for next week's throne speech.
- On 16 September 2020, [Canada's Chief Public Health Officer in lieu of an in-person update](#) called attention to the over *six million* Canadians who have been tested for COVID-19 over the past months, including the over 300,000 people currently being tested each week across Canada. The official indicated that one of the most important public health measures we can take if we have symptoms, or think we have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, is to get tested. For assistance in deciding whether and how to be tested for COVID-19, you can access [COVID-19 self-assessment tools](#) online. Testing enables local public health agencies to interrupt chains of transmission and prevent further spread of the virus through case detection and contact tracing, and isolation

and quarantine, respectively. In Erratum, Chief Public Health Officer noted that on 15 September average of 838 new cases had been reported daily during the preceding seven days. The calculation of this average erroneously included some cases that had been identified during Labour Day holiday weekend but were not reported until 8 September. With these cases removed, the correct average daily case count for the period 8-14 September is 696 cases.

- On 16 September 2020, [Alberta announced plans to spend \\$1.3 billion allocated by the federal government to increase COVID-19 testing](#) enhance health-care capacity, funnel money to municipal transit systems and buy more personal protective equipment. Plans for the spending under the Safe Restart Agreement were outlined in a letter sent to the prime minister by Alberta Premier. The province listed six key six priorities in spending \$349.9 million to increase testing, contact tracing, and data management.
- According to [a top doctor who advised the government of Ontario on school reopening](#), classes in Canada's high risk schools should ideally have 20 or fewer students so children can maintain safe distance from each other. President of Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children cited repeatedly in drafting back to school plans that it is critical that we create a classroom environment with reduced class sizes so that physical distancing can be happening. Preliminary results of a new study released by the hospital on 14 September showed it was not possible to maintain two meters (6.5 ft) of social distancing in standard classrooms with more than 12 to 15 students.
- [Six Calgary schools have now met the threshold for a declared outbreak. Notre Dame High School and Crescent Heights High School are the latest schools to make the list.](#) The province listed St. Wilfrid Elementary School under watch status on 15 September, meaning there have been five or more cases in the school with possible in-school transmission. The province reported on 15 September 2020, 124 new cases of COVID-19 and no additional deaths. Additionally Calgary City council voted on 14 September 2020 to extend Calgary's mask bylaw until at least December 2020, it is possible that the bylaw will be in place until there is a vaccine available.
- On 15 September 2020, [Manitoba's John Pritchard School on Henderson Highway announced that there were four newly confirmed cases of COVID-19 at the school.](#) Five students at a Winnipeg school have now tested positive for the novel coronavirus, bringing the total to five after a previously asymptomatic child tested positive. The school sent a letter telling parents that Grades 6, 7 and 8, the split class of 4/5, and the before and after school program will begin remote learning immediately. Manitoba Public Health anticipates that remote learning will continue for these cohorts/grades for 14 days but this may be lengthened or shortened as the investigation continues.
- [Two more schools in Surrey, B.C., are reporting cases of COVID-19. One individual attended Sullivan Heights Secondary and the other attended William Watson Elementary. Both people were at the schools on 10 September.](#) The cases are considered low-risk. Only individuals who are believed to have had a possible exposure to COVID-19 are being notified to self-isolate or watch for symptoms. Parents who haven't been notified by phone or letter are to send their child to school as normal. B.C. Health Minister stated that he would review notification guidelines on cases in schools, after the disease was reported at three Metro Vancouver high schools. A staff member at Panorama Ridge Secondary and a person at Johnston Heights Secondary — both in Surrey — tested positive for COVID-19 before in-person classes were back in session. The Delta School District would not indicate whether its confirmed case is a student or staff member, but added the person is self-isolating at home. That exposure occurred after the new school year began.
- [The BC Centre for Disease Control will now notify the public about every case of COVID-19 detected in the school system,](#) with details, following public outcry and comparisons to policies in other provinces. Previously, school districts in B.C. notified staff and students that someone in their individual school community had tested positive for the disease caused by the coronavirus. As of 16 September, the centre will include links to regional health authorities' school notification pages, including additional details such as date and type of exposure, on its overall list of exposures.
- [The Ontario government launched a new voluntary interactive screening tool to assist parents, students and staff with the daily assessment of COVID-19 symptoms and risk factors that is required before attending school.](#) The results will let parents, students, and education staff know whether they should attend school each day or guide at-risk individuals to proper resources. This tool is another layer of prevention that the province is using to protect the health and safety of students, staff, and the communities where they live and work. The new easy-to-use tool is voluntary and available for all parents, students and staff to use to help screen for symptoms of illness every day. Users will simply respond to clinician-informed symptom and risk questions, and the tool will then immediately inform users whether it is safe to attend school that day. The tool protects privacy and does not collect any personal health information. The tool was also developed in house by the Ontario Digital Service at no additional cost to taxpayers. In addition, local public health units have filled over 530 nursing positions, or 85 per cent, of the additional 625 nursing positions created to help keep students and staff safe. The nurses will be providing rapid-response support to schools and school boards in facilitating public health and preventative measures, including screening, testing, tracing and mitigation strategies. In order to ensure that schools are supported from the start of the school year, several public health units have temporarily redeployed existing nurses while recruitment activities continue.

- On 16 September 2020, [Toronto's medical officer of health](#) noted that indoor activities such as dining at restaurants and hanging out in bars are contributing to about 20% of COVID-19 community transmission cases. Instances of staff infecting one another at bars and restaurants are on the rise. However, the same cannot be said for infections being passed from restaurant and bar staff to their customers. The official implored employers to allow for sick time for workers who display symptoms and reminded people to wash their hands frequently and to social distance.
- [Canada's largest school board states it no longer needs additional classroom spaces for elementary schools because so many parents have opted out of in-person learning](#). The Toronto District School Board indicated there were initial concerns about the lack of space at five of its schools, but more students have since switched over to online learning.
- According to a media analysis, [more than 1,700 nurses working for 13 of the Quebec regional health boards left their jobs between mid-March and August 2020](#). That is compared to around 1,300 during the same period in 2019. Quebec just entered to a second wave of COVID-19 cases; the province's health-care system has lost hundreds of nurses who have quit the profession in the past six months. Le Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux de *Laval* (*CISSS de Laval*) reported a 52-per-cent increase in nurses who left their jobs. For the CIUSSS Ouest-de-l'Île-de-Montréal, that number is 17 per cent. At the CIUSSS Mauricie-et-Centre-du-Québec, 247 nurses left their jobs, an increase of 72 per cent.
- [Ontario Premier is now pushing to rollback social gathering limits in Toronto, Peel and Ottawa, which have been driving the province's COVID-19 case numbers](#). The province increased the social gathering limit in mid-July allowing up to 50 people to gather indoors and 100 people outdoors. People quickly capitalized on the new rules, throwing end-of-summer parties, which public health official indicated contributed to spread of COVID-19 in densely populated cities. Ontario's chief medical officer of health acknowledged that residents might have been confused about the new rules, and stressed that masking and physical distancing still applied during those gatherings – except for those included in a social bubble.

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

- [On 16 September, the National Institutes of Health announced a \\$12 million award for outreach and engagement efforts in ethnic and racial minority communities disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic](#). The award to RTI International, a non-profit research institution, will support teams in 11 states established as part of the NIH Community Engagement Alliance (CEAL) Against COVID-19 Disparities. These teams have received initial funding to immediately create CEAL programs, and RTI will serve as the Technical and Administrative Support and Coordination (TASC) center. The CEAL research teams will focus on COVID-19 awareness and education research, especially among African Americans, Hispanics/Latinos, and American Indians — populations that account for over half of all reported cases in the United States. They also will promote and facilitate the inclusion and participation of these groups in vaccine and therapeutic clinical trials to prevent and treat the disease.
- [On 16 September, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services \(HHS\) and Department of Defense \(DoD\) released two documents outlining the Trump Administration's detailed strategy to deliver safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine doses to the American people as quickly and reliably as possible](#). The documents, developed by HHS in coordination with DoD and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), provide a strategic distribution overview along with an interim playbook for state, tribal, territorial, and local public health programs and their partners on how to plan and operationalize a vaccination response to COVID-19 within their respective jurisdictions.
- On 16 September 2020, [the United States government outlined the plan to make vaccines for COVID-19 available free to all Americans](#), even as polls show a strong undercurrent of skepticism rippling across the land. In a report to United States Congress and an accompanying guidelines for states and localities, federal health agencies and the Defence Department sketched out complex plans for a vaccination campaign to begin gradually in January 2021 or possibly later 2020, eventually ramping up to reach any American who wants a shot. The vaccine itself will be free of charge, and patients will not be charged for the administration of shots, thanks to billions of dollars in taxpayer financing. The funding was approved by the Congress, and allocated by the current US administration.
- [Becton Dickinson, an American multinational medical technology company stated on 16 September that it is investigating reports from U.S. nursing homes that its rapid coronavirus testing equipment is producing false-positive results](#). Tests conducted on the company's Veritor Plus system for detecting the virus are reporting multiple false positive results in some cases. So far, the number of false-positive reports is small and the company has contacted the sites and is actively investigating the situation to obtain additional details. The company, under its agreement with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, provides more than 11,000 nursing homes in the country with COVID-19 tests for its residents and staff. In July, the U.S. government agreed to buy 2,000 of the company's BD Veritor Plus Systems and 750,000 of its SARS-CoV-2 antigen test, as

the country ramps up testing for the virus that has been spreading at an alarming rate. Becton Dickinson plans to produce 10 million tests through September and then ramp up to producing 2 million tests per week thereafter.

- On 16 September 2020, US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention published [COVID-19 Parental Resources Kit](#) indicating that Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) can affect children and young people directly and indirectly. Beyond getting sick, many young people's social, emotional, and mental well-being has been impacted by the pandemic. Trauma faced at this developmental stage can continue to affect them across their lifespan. Some of the challenges children and young people face during the COVID-19 pandemic relate to changes in their routines, breaks in continuity of learning, breaks in continuity of health care, missed significant life events, lost security and safety.
- On 16 September 2020, US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention published [Ten Clinical Tips on COVID-19 for Healthcare Providers Involved in Patient Care](#), including tips in Treatment and Prophylaxis, Symptoms and Diagnosis, Co-Infections, and Severe Illness.
- On 16 September 2020, US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention published an update on [Crew Disembarkations through Commercial Travel](#). CDC is allowing crew members to disembark from all cruise ships in U.S. waters with certain precautions. Cruise lines with complete and accurate response plans will be able to use commercial travel to disembark crew members from certain ships if the ships meet certain criteria set by CDC including that there have been no confirmed cases of COVID-19 or COVID-like illnesses on board the ship within the last 28 days. The document also consists [Criteria for Commercial Transport of Crew](#) and Status of [No Sail Order Response Plans](#).

[WHO - Keep health workers safe to keep patients safe: WHO \(Official\)](#)

On 17 September 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) in a news release called governments and health care leaders to address persistent threats to the health and safety of health workers and patients. WHO's Health Worker Safety Charter is a step towards ensuring that health workers have the safe working conditions, the training, the payment and the respect these workers deserve. The Charter, released on 17 September 2020 for [World Patient Safety Day Campaign](#), calls on governments and those running health services at local levels to take five actions to better protect health workers. These include steps to protect health workers from violence; to improve their mental health; to protect them from physical and biological hazards; to advance national programs for health worker safety, and to connect health worker safety policies to existing patient safety policies. A [recent review](#) of health care professionals found [one in four reported depression and anxiety, and one in three suffered insomnia](#) during COVID-19. WHO [recently highlighted](#) an alarming rise in reports of verbal harassment, discrimination and physical violence among health workers in the wake of COVID-19.

IHR Announcement - WHO: Invitation to participate in the COVID-19 Member States Information session (Official)

The WHO posted on their Event Information Site (EIS) the invitation to participate in the COVID-19 Member States Information session on Thursday, 17 September 2020 (12:30-14:30)

[UN - More research needed into COVID-19 effects on children, says WHO head \(Official\)](#)

According to the head of the UN World Health Organization (WHO), more research is needed into factors that increase the risk of severe COVID-19 disease among children and adolescents, adding that while children may have largely been spared many of the most severe effects, they have suffered in other ways. According to WHO data, less than 10 per cent of reported cases and less than 0.2 per cent of deaths are in people under the age of 20. However, additional research is needed into the factors that put children and adolescents at an increased risk. In addition, the potential long-term health effects in those who have been infected remains unknown. Referring to closure of schools around the world, which has hit millions of children, impacting not only their education but also a range of other important services, the WHO Director-General stated that the decision to close schools should be a last resort, temporary and only at a local level in areas with intense transmission. Based on latest scientific evidence, the [guidance on school-related public health measures in the context of COVID-19](#) provides practical advice for schools in areas with no cases, sporadic cases, clusters of cases or community transmission. They were developed with input from the Technical Advisory Group of Experts on Educational Institutions and COVID-19, established by the three UN agencies in June.

[ECDC - COVID-19: Cases increasing across Europe \(Official\)](#)

According to the latest COVID-19 data, the 14-day case notification rate for the EU/EEA and the UK has been increasing for more than 50 days, with over half of all EU countries currently experiencing an increase in cases. While increased testing contributes to better awareness of all ongoing transmission, it is not the only reason for the increase of COVID-19 cases, which is also linked to the relaxation of physical distancing and other preventive measures. Recent evidence confirms the importance of physical distancing for the prevention of person-to-person transmission. Physical distancing of one metre or more has been proven to ensure a five-fold reduction in the transmission risk, and every extra metre of distance gives twice the protective effect. ECDC recommends that testing efforts are maximised, with the aim of offering timely testing to all symptomatic cases, including mild ones. Along with rapid contact tracing, large-scale testing is the key to controlling transmission within a population, followed by the isolation and treatment of identified cases and the

quarantining of contacts. Furthermore, with the influenza season approaching, the preparedness of healthcare systems across Europe is vital. This includes essential services, primary care facilities and hospitals ensuring appropriate surge capacity plans in case of a high demand for the care of patients with respiratory distress.

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

- On 16 September 2020, [a World Health Organization official noted that the agency does not recommend countries issue so-called immunity passports](#) for the coronavirus, because scientists are still unsure whether Covid-19 antibodies reduce the risk of reinfection. Earlier in the pandemic, some countries said they would issue passports or certificates that indicate whether someone has had Covid-19, allowing them to travel or return to work, assuming that they are protected. That idea has since been abandoned.
- On 16 September 2020, [the general commanding American troops in Bavaria, Germany](#) met with local officials in the Alpine town of Garmisch-Partenkirchen to reassure them of the U.S. military's commitment to preventing the spread of COVID-19, after an outbreak at a troop hotel sickened dozens. A total of 59 people in the town, including 25 staff at the U.S. military-run Edelweiss Lodge and Resort, tested positive for the new coronavirus after a 26-year-old American woman working at the hotel allegedly flouted quarantine rules by visiting several bars last week.
- [About 12 million people in South Africa have "probably" been infected with the coronavirus](#), but that startlingly high number has not caused a similarly high death rate and might indicate a widespread "level of immunity," according to the country's minister of health. More than 20 per cent of South Africa's population of 58 million have had the virus at some point, the minister estimated earlier this week. He cited studies that found the presence of coronavirus antibodies in blood samples taken from parts of the population. The findings have prompted the government to start a more complete national study.
- [A city hospital in India treated a paediatric co-infection, where a 10-year-old was treated of dengue and Covid-19 infection](#). The child was brought to Aditya Birla Hospital's flu clinic with complaints of high grade fever (more than 102F every 8-12 hours) along with sore throat, malaise and nausea for five days with positive Covid-19 RT-PCR report. There were no complaints of cough and breathlessness, as per the hospital authorities. The patient's course of treatment was planned in a way that both her medical conditions of dengue and Covid-19 could be treated. According to an associate director from the department of Neonatology and Paediatrics, it is important for paediatricians and physicians to be increasingly aware of the phenomena of co-infection. This was not a rare case as the hospital have reported two such infections in children too. The viral antigens of both Covid-19 and dengue are similar and so they may test positive.
- [An international team of scientists will examine the possibility Sars-Cov-2 leaked from a laboratory as part of a comprehensive investigation into the origins of the virus](#). The team is being set up as part of the Lancet COVID-19 Commission, a body established in July to offer practical solutions to the pandemic and make recommendations on how the next one can be avoided or better defended against. Since the coronavirus first emerged in Wuhan, China in late December, a deluge of conspiracy theories have circulated about its origins. The Lancet Commission notes in its mission statement that the evidence to date supports the view that Sars-Cov-2 is a naturally occurring virus rather than the result of laboratory creation and release. But it adds that investigators should examine the possibility of laboratory involvement in a scientific and objective way that is unhindered by geopolitical agendas and misinformation. It is hoped a full investigation will, if nothing else, will rule out baseless and uninformed allegations and conspiracy theories that are unbacked by evidence.
- On 16 September 2020, [researchers at Taiwan's Chang Gung University announced that they have developed a kit that can detect the potency of COVID-19 antibodies](#), which they believe will aid in the process of developing a vaccine for the disease. However, the test kit developed, which uses a specialized protein to detect the neutralizing antibodies of the virus that causes COVID-19, can be used in any laboratory, according to the researchers. Results are available in two to three hours, though the statement did not detail their accuracy. The research team signed a technology agreement with Formosa Biomedical Inc., in the hope of making the kit more widely available.
- [According to newly released data, a drug being developed by Eli Lilly helped sick patients rid their systems of the virus that causes Covid-19 sooner and may have prevented them from landing in the hospital](#). The drug is what is known as a monoclonal antibody, which experts view as being among the most likely technologies to help treat Covid-19.

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

- On 15 September 2020, study published in the [International Journal of Infectious Diseases](#), described a *live* SARS-CoV-2 virus was isolated from air samples collected 2 to 4.8 meters (6.6 to 15.7 feet) away from two coronavirus patients—one recently released and one newly admitted—in a single hospital room. University of Florida at Gainesville researchers used new air samplers with a gentle collection process that is less likely than commonly used samplers to inactivate viruses. They were able to detect SARS-CoV-2 only when using the

samplers without a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter on the inlet tube. The researchers collected three 3-hour air samples from a room on a dedicated COVID-19 ward that was well ventilated, with six air exchanges per hour and triple-filter treatment of air returned to the room. They isolated the coronavirus from the air samples on cell culture and sequenced the genome. The authors said their findings show that, even in the absence of aerosol-generating procedures, COVID-19 patients can produce aerosols that can spread the virus farther than the 6 feet recommended in physical distancing guidelines.

- On 15 September 2020, the study, published in the [Annals of Internal Medicine](#), involved testing 1,434 adult and pediatric residents and staff at 14 King County homeless shelters for COVID-19 infection from Jan 1 and Apr 24. University of Washington at Seattle researchers have found that active surveillance and routine onsite testing could prevent the transmission of COVID-19 in homeless shelters, high-risk settings because of crowding, communal sleeping areas and shared bathrooms. The authors noted the findings indicate the need for routine COVID-19 testing outside of hospitals and clinics for the more than 560,000 homeless people in the United States. Passive sentinel surveillance for respiratory viruses may only detect symptomatic cases severe enough to prompt health-seeking behavior and may miss milder ones, delaying the recognition of outbreaks and further viral spread, they concluded.
- A study published on 16 September 2020 in the [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#) shows that among 598 hospitalized pregnant women with COVID-19, 55% were asymptomatic at admission. Severe illness occurred among symptomatic pregnant women, including intensive care unit admissions (16%), mechanical ventilation (8%), and death (1%). Pregnancy losses occurred for 2% of pregnancies completed during COVID-19-associated hospitalizations and were experienced by both symptomatic and asymptomatic women. During 1 March– 22 August 2020, COVID-NET identified 7,895 hospitalized women aged 15–49 years with COVID-19; discharge disposition was determined, and chart review was completed for 2,318 (29.4%). Among 2,255 (97.3%) women with information about pregnancy status, 598 (26.5%) were pregnant, with median age 29 years. Among 577 (96.5%) pregnant women with reported race and ethnicity, 42.5% were Hispanic or Latino (Hispanic), and 26.5% were non-Hispanic Black (Black). Among 596 women with COVID-19 whose pregnancy trimester was known, 14 (2.3%), 61 (10.2%), and 521 (87.4%) were hospitalized during the first, second, and third trimesters, respectively. The reason for hospital admission was reported for 324 women: 242 (74.7%) were hospitalized for obstetric indications (including labor and delivery), 61 (18.8%) for COVID-19–related illness, and 21 (6.5%) for other reasons. The most common reason for admission during the first or second pregnancy trimester was COVID-19–related illness (56.8%) and during the third trimester, obstetric indications (81.9%). Among hospitalized pregnant women with COVID-19, 20.6% had at least one underlying medical condition; asthma (8.2%) and hypertension (4.3%) were the most prevalent.
- A study published on 16 September 2020 in the [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#) indicates that the prevalences of prepregnancy obesity and gestational diabetes were higher among pregnant women hospitalized for COVID-19–related illness (e.g., worsening respiratory status) than among those admitted for pregnancy-related treatment or procedures (e.g., delivery) and found to have COVID-19. Intensive care was required for 30% (13 of 43) of pregnant women admitted for COVID-19, and one pregnant woman died from COVID-19. During 1 March –30 May 2020, among 4,408 persons hospitalized with a COVID-19 diagnosis at Vaccine Safety Datalink (VSD) sites, 105 (2.4%) pregnant women were identified. SARS-CoV-2 real-time reverse transcription–polymerase chain reaction test results were positive for 104 women. One additional woman, who had a negative SARS-CoV-2 test result, was symptomatic and had close contacts with confirmed COVID-19; she received a clinical diagnosis of COVID-19. Among these 105 pregnant women, 43 (41.0%) were hospitalized for COVID-19 illness and 62 (59.0%) were admitted for obstetric reasons. Among the 62 women admitted for obstetric reasons, 12 (19.4%) had COVID-19–compatible symptoms, and 50 (80.6%) were asymptomatic. The median age of all women was 30 years (range = 17–54 years), and 61.9% were Hispanic or Latino. ICU admission was required for 14 (13.3%) hospitalized pregnant women, including 13 (30.2%) of the 43 women hospitalized for COVID-19; six of these women required mechanical ventilation, and one, admitted at 15 weeks' gestation, died from COVID-19. The prevalence of prepregnancy obesity (body mass index ≥ 30 kg/m²) was 36.2% overall and was higher among the 43 women hospitalized for COVID-19 (44.2%) than among the 62 hospitalized for obstetric reasons (30.6%). Similarly, prevalence of gestational diabetes was higher among women hospitalized for COVID-19 (25.6%) than among those hospitalized for obstetric reasons (8.1%).
- In a study published on 15 September 2020, in the [Emerging Infectious Diseases Journal](#), the researchers evaluated effectiveness of personal protective measures against severe acute respiratory disease coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) infection. The authors' case-control study included 211 cases of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and 839 controls in Thailand. Cases were defined as asymptomatic contacts of COVID-19 patients who later tested positive for SARS-CoV-2; controls were asymptomatic contacts who never tested positive. Wearing masks all the time during contact was independently associated with lower risk for SARS-CoV-2 infection compared with not wearing masks; wearing a mask sometimes during contact did not lower infection risk. The investigators found the type of mask worn was not independently associated with infection and that contacts who always wore masks were more likely to practice social distancing. Maintaining ≥ 1 m distance from a person with COVID-19, having close contact for ≤ 15 minutes, and frequent handwashing were independently associated with lower risk

for infection. The findings support consistent wearing of masks, handwashing, and social distancing to protect against COVID-19.

- On 15 September 2020, a study was published in the online issue of [Neurology](#), the medical journal of the American Academy of Neurology. [The study confirms a pattern where stroke could be the first symptom of COVID-19 in patients under 50.](#) The research team examined data on 160 stroke patients with COVID-19 and determined one of the most concerning symptoms of the virus is the development of large blood clots that can cause blockages in the arteries that lead to the brain-causing stroke. Researchers at Western University and Lawson Health Research Institute observed the connection between strokes and the novel coronavirus, have found approximately 2 per cent of patients admitted to hospital with COVID-19 would suffer a stroke. The conclusion is that for nearly half of COVID-19 patients under 50, the first sign of the virus could be a type of stroke.

Domestic Events of Interest

[Canada - Drop in Windsor distribution of life-saving naloxone kits during pandemic \(Media\)](#)

The number of life-saving naloxone kits being distributed in Windsor has seen a significant drop since the COVID-19 pandemic began in March, while overdose-related emergency department visits and deaths appear to be increasing. A professor of epidemiology at the University of Toronto, is one of the researchers behind the first-ever study to track naloxone distribution in the province by geographic location. The study estimates the availability of naloxone, dispensed primarily by pharmacies, has lowered the rate of opioid-related deaths by anywhere from a quarter to half ever since free kits were introduced by the Ontario government in June of 2016. In the Windsor area, what the study found was that the number of kits that was being dispensed every month has dropped by about half since the COVID-19 pandemic. About 350 naloxone kits were dispensed every month in Windsor before the pandemic. That number dropped to about 175 in the last few months, these numbers are alarming, since there appears to be an increase in opioid-related deaths in the region. Forty-seven people died from drug overdoses in Windsor-Essex in 2019. Through the first four months of 2020, there are 19 confirmed deaths. This could be a result of the societal shift in focus from the dangers of the opioid crisis to the dangers of COVID-19, which may have reduced the public's awareness of the kits. The Windsor-Essex County Health Unit has warned of some of the dangers of self-isolating for those dealing with substance abuse. There have been upticks in emergency department visits due to opioids, with most months of 2020 reporting greater numbers year-over-year. During one two-day span in July alone, there were nine overdose cases, all involving fentanyl. In August, the health unit, along with partners involved in the Windsor-Essex Community Opioid and Substance Strategy, began seeking expressions of interest from building owners and landlords to house a safe drug consumption site. The Consumption and Treatment Services site would offer wrap-around services including counselling, primary care, opioid-dependency treatment and other health services as well as being a safe place for people to consume their substances.

[British Columbia - B.C. Physicians, nurses can now prescribe safe drug alternatives to battle overdose crisis](#)

(Media)

B.C.'s top doctor has issued a public health order to give physicians and nurse practitioners the ability to prescribe safer pharmaceutical alternatives to help slow the province's overdose crisis. Provincial health officer indicated in a release that increasing the number of health professionals authorized to help people at risk for overdose by prescribing alternatives to toxic street drugs will be critical to saving lives and linking more people to treatment and other health and social services. The order, issued under the Health Professions Act, authorizes registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses to prescribe pharmaceutical alternatives to street drugs to help separate more people from the poisoned street drug supply to save lives and provide opportunities for ongoing care, treatment and support. This new standard will include training and education. To date, more than 1,000 people in B.C. have died of an overdose in 2020.

International Events of Interest

[United States - Vibrio Vulnificus in Connecticut: Unusual number of infections prompt warning \(Media\)](#)

Connecticut state health officials have issued a warning for the public in shoreline areas about the potential dangers of exposure to salt or brackish water along Long Island Sound, due to an unusually high number of *Vibrio vulnificus* infections. Since July, five cases of *Vibrio vulnificus* infections have been reported to the Department of Public Health (one infection in July, four in August). The patients are from Fairfield (1), Middlesex (1), and New Haven (3) counties and are between 49 – 85 years of age (median 73); 4 are male, 1 female. Two patients had septicemia (infection of the bloodstream) and three had serious wound infections. All five cases patients were hospitalized. No deaths have been reported. All five cases reported exposure to salt or brackish water during activities such as swimming, crabbing, and boating. All five patients had pre-existing wounds or sustained new wounds during these activities which led to the *Vibrio* infections. *Vibrio vulnificus* infection is an extremely rare illness. In the past 10 years, between 2010 and 2019, only seven cases were reported in Connecticut.

[United States - Health officials suspect first case of dangerous EEE virus in Barry County resident \(Media\)](#)

On 15 September 2020, preliminary test results indicated that a Barry County resident may have contracted the first case of Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) in the area. Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) officials stated a second set of testing was expected to be completed by the end of the week to confirm the findings. Chief medical executive and chief deputy for health at MDHHS indicated that this suspected EEE case in a Michigan resident shows this is an ongoing threat to the health and safety of Michiganders and calls for continued actions to prevent exposure, including aerial treatment. MDHHS continues to encourage local officials in the affected counties to consider postponing, rescheduling or cancelling outdoor activities occurring at or after dusk, particularly those involving children to reduce the potential for people to be bitten by mosquitoes. The human case was in addition to 22 confirmed cases in horses from 10 counties throughout the state.

[Netherlands- West Nile Virus surfaces in the Netherlands for the first time ever \(Media\)](#)

A bird found in the Utrecht region tested positive for the West Nile virus (WNV). This is the first time that the virus is found in the Netherlands. According to the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM), an infection with the virus has already been found in people in the Netherlands, but all these infections had been contracted abroad. Over a thousand wild birds have been captured and tested since January 2020. In previous years, birds with WNV antibodies have been found, but never once with an active infection. WNV has already been found in Germany, European nations in the central and southeastern regions of the continent. Mosquitos pass the virus on to humans, and other mammals including horses.

[DR Congo - Children among latest DRC Ebola cases as outbreak grows to 123 cases \(Official\)](#)

Two more Ebola cases were reported in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) Equateur province outbreak, along with two more deaths, the WHO African regional office said on Twitter. The overall totals are now 123 cases and 50 deaths. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) noted in an update posted on [ReliefWeb](#), that a recent case was reported in a newly affected Ngelo Monzoi health area in the Bikoro health zone, raising the number of affected health areas to 40. It also said two infections in children were confirmed on 14 September, one age 2 months and the other a 5-year-old.

[China - Over 3,000 Infected in China's Latest Bacterial Disease Outbreak \(Media\)](#)

Nearly a year after an outbreak of brucellosis that took hold in Lanzhou city, in China's northwest Gansu Province, the city's health commission said that 3,245 people have tested positive for the disease. The city's announcement on 15 September comes as an update after a review by the Gansu Provincial Center for Disease Control and Prevention. According to the announcement, an investigation by provincial and local authorities found that the Lanzhou Biopharmaceutical Plant used expired sanitizers during its brucellosis vaccine production from 24 July to 20 August 2020, which led to inadequate exhaust discharge and sterilization. The exhaust carried fermented broth which later turned into aerosol. Carried by the wind, the bacteria-bearing air spread to where the Lanzhou Veterinary Research Institute was located. Staff developed antibodies from breathing in waste air in July and August last year. Chinese outlet Caixin reported that ten neighboring residential communities were affected within a radius of 1 km. No officials have been legally held responsible for the mass event.

Researches, Policies and Guidelines

[United States - New guidelines issued for S aureus prevention, control in NICUs \(Official and Media\)](#)

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued new recommendations for the prevention and control of Staphylococcus aureus in neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) patients. The guidelines are based on current understanding of the transmission dynamics of S aureus in the NICU and were developed through a systematic review of the best available literature available through August 2019. The review was guided by questions about the most effective strategies for preventing S aureus transmission from colonized or infected NICU patients, which sampling sites and laboratory assays most effectively identify colonization in NICU patients, and what risk factors exist for S aureus infection in NICU patients. [The guidelines recommend](#) performing active surveillance testing at regular intervals for S aureus colonization in NICU patients when there is increased evidence of infection or in an outbreak setting, and for methicillin-resistant S aureus colonization when there is evidence of ongoing healthcare-associated transmission. Active surveillance can be conducted using either culture-based or polymerase chain reaction detection methods, and samples should be collected from the nostrils. The authors conditionally recommend testing of infants from other newborn care units, and targeted decolonization for colonized NICU patients.

[More than 1 in 3 U.S. pediatricians dismiss vaccine-refusing families \(Media\)](#)

Parents who choose to forgo or delay their children's vaccinations may quickly find themselves without a pediatrician. Just over half (51%) of pediatric offices in the United States have a policy to dismiss families that refuse childhood vaccines, a nationwide survey found. Thirty-seven percent of pediatricians themselves stated they often dismissed

families for refusing vaccines, and 6% indicated they would dismiss a family for choosing to spread out crucial early vaccines. When doctors dismiss families for refusing vaccines, parents are sometimes swayed, the survey revealed. In fact, 18% often or always change their minds, while another 48% sometimes do. Twenty-nine percent rarely change their minds, and 5% never do, according to the surveys. The report found that private practices were more likely than community, hospital-based or health maintenance organizations to have a dismissal policy. Practices in the Midwest were less likely to have dismissal policies than practices in other regions.

[UN - UN report highlights links between 'unprecedented biodiversity loss' and spread of disease \(Official\)](#)

The continued degradation of the environment is increasing the likelihood of diseases spreading from animals to humans, warns a UN report on biodiversity, released on 15 September. The fifth edition of the UN's Global Biodiversity Outlook report, published by the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD), provides an authoritative overview of the state of nature worldwide. The report notes the importance of biodiversity in addressing climate change, and long-term food security, and concludes that action to protect biodiversity is essential to prevent future pandemics. The study acts as a wake-up call, and an encouragement to consider the dangers involved in mankind's current relationship with nature: continued biodiversity loss, and the ongoing degradation of ecosystems, are having profound consequences of human wellbeing and survival. According to the report, as nature degrades, new opportunities emerge for the spread to humans and animals of devastating diseases like coronavirus. The window of time available is short, but the pandemic has also demonstrated that transformative changes are possible when they must be made. Contained within the report are several recommendations, or transitions, which map out a scenario for a world in which business as usual is halted, and environmental devastation is reversed. Under the proposals, ecosystems would be restored and conserved; food systems would be redesigned to enhance productivity, whilst minimizing their negative effects; and the oceans would be managed sustainably. The design of cities also comes under the spotlight, with calls for a reduced environmental footprint in urban areas, and green infrastructure, making space for nature within built landscapes. The report amplifies the UN's support for nature-based solutions, hailed as one of the most effective ways of combatting climate change. Alongside a rapid phase-out of fossil fuel use, they can provide positive benefits for biodiversity and other sustainability goals. The Summit will highlight the crisis facing humanity from the degradation of biodiversity, and the urgent need to accelerate action on biodiversity for sustainable development.

[Vaccine candidate fails to reduce *C difficile* infection in phase 3 trial \(Media\)](#)

A phase 3 trial for a bivalent *Clostridioides difficile* toxoid vaccine was terminated because of futility, an international team of investigators led by scientists from Sanofi Pasteur reported in [The Lancet Infectious Diseases](#). The investigators suggest several factors may have played a role in the vaccine not being effective, despite showing good immunogenicity. Among the explanations are that vaccination did not generate appropriate antibody function to effectively neutralize toxin in the intestinal environment. An aging or frail immune system and previous exposure to *C difficile* could also be factors, they noted.

Best Regards | Sincères salutations
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