

## Exton, Adam (HC/SC)

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**Sent:** 2020-09-23 8:32 AM  
**To:** gphin / rmisp (PHAC/ASPC)  
**Subject:** GPHIN Daily Report (23 September 2020)  
**Attachments:** GPHIN Daily Report 20200923 ER.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 22 September 2020 at 19:00 EDT, a total of 146,663 cases have been recorded in Canada including 9,234 deaths. The cases are reported in Newfoundland and Labrador (272 confirmed cases, 3 deaths), Prince Edward Island (57 confirmed cases), Nova Scotia (1,087 confirmed cases, 65 deaths), New Brunswick (196 confirmed cases, 2 deaths), Quebec (68,617 confirmed cases, 5,805 deaths), Ontario (47,752 confirmed cases, 2,832 deaths), Manitoba (1,632 confirmed cases, 18 deaths), Saskatchewan (1,824 confirmed cases, 24 deaths), Alberta (16,889 confirmed cases, 258 deaths), British Columbia (8,304 confirmed cases, 227 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 23 September 2020, 11:33 GMT, there were 31,829,244 cases of COVID-19 and 975,457 deaths reported globally. Top 10 countries with the highest number of cases, by alphabetical order are: Argentina (652,174 cases, 13,952 deaths), Brazil (4,595,335 cases, 138,159 deaths); Colombia (777,537 cases, 24,570 deaths); India (5,650,540 cases, 90,021 deaths); Mexico (705,263 cases, 74,348 deaths); Peru (776,546 cases, 31,586 deaths); Russia (1,122,241 cases, 19,799 deaths); South Africa (663,282 cases, 16,118 deaths); Spain (682,267 cases, 30,904 deaths); United States (7,098,291 cases, 205,491 deaths).

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

- [The federal government will deliver its speech from the throne](#) on 23 September 2020. The immediate focus will be on dealing with the health challenges of the pandemic, followed by medium-term efforts to support Canadians struggling financially and get them back to work. In the end, the government plans to introduce measures to revive the economy with an environmental focus. According to reports, the government is working on a billion-dollar electric car strategy, and Bloomberg says there will be spending commitments for vaccines, COVID-19 testing and containing local outbreaks. As MPs prepare to return to the House of Commons, talks are still underway for the possibility of virtual voting.
- On 22 September 2020, [Federal health officials presented new data modelling today that shows the COVID-19 epidemic is accelerating nationally](#). The model shows that Canada is on track to record as many as 10,000 more cases of COVID-19 by next Friday. The data was presented as every province west of the Atlantic travel bubble has seen a rise in COVID-19 cases. Chief Public Health Officer said if Canadians stay on the current path or let their guards down, there will likely be a massive spike in cases over the next couple of months. But if public health measures are strengthened and Canadians take more personal protective measures and limit contact with others, the curve will flatten out this fall, according to the official.
- On 22 September 2020, [Ontario Premier announced that flu shot campaign first pillar of Ontario fall pandemic preparedness plan](#), as critics said rising case counts warranted far more decisive action. Premier noted that the rest of his government's pandemic preparedness strategy would be released in the coming days, adding that a robust flu vaccination campaign would help preserve hospital capacity.
- On 22 September 2020, [Ottawa's Chief Medical Officer of Health is invoking a class order](#), demanding that anyone who tests positive for COVID-19, shows signs or symptoms of the virus, is in close contact with a positive case, is

awaiting a test result, or otherwise believes they have the illness, must isolate for 14 days. Anyone who does not follow the class Section 22 order under the Health Protection and Promotion Act could face fines up to \$5,000 for every day, or part of a day, on which the offence occurs or continues. The official explains the order is being put into place in light of an increase in community transmission of COVID-19 and recent situations where there's been "slow adherence to [public health guidance](#)."

- On 22 September 2020, [Quebec is raising the COVID-19 alert level for three regions](#) as health authorities warn the province is witnessing a second wave of the pandemic. Health Minister announced that the Laval region north of Montreal and the Outaouais region in western Quebec will be moving to the orange, or moderate, alert level. The Centre-du-Quebec region in central Quebec will move from green to the yellow, early-warning level. Orange is the second-highest level in the province's COVID-19 risk-assessment system, which measures the risk posed by COVID-19 in specific geographic areas.
- In a letter that went out to parents on 20 September 2020, [the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board \(SMCDSB\) confirmed a positive case of the virus at Father F.X. O'Reilly](#). Citing privacy issues, the board did not specify whether the person was a student or staff member, but parents who received the letter are reporting it was a kindergarten student. The board announced that it would follow the process the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit has in place, to prevent further spread and to protect staff and students. The Board also mentioned that the school will remain open.
- [According to media, days after a Queen's student tested positive for COVID-19, the University shared its plans for managing an outbreak of the virus in the community](#). Queens University Principal asked Provost and Vice-Principal to lead the University's Incident Command Structure, which is designed to further protect the health and safety of faculty, staff, and students, as well as the greater Kingston community. Members of the Incident Command Team Executive meet three times a week to review the status of COVID-19 cases in the Queen's community and adjust campus operations and communications accordingly. Supported by the Executive, the Provost will act as the University Incident Commander in the event of an outbreak. If there is a specific area on campus impacted by the outbreak, the relevant Dean or portfolio lead will be included on the team.
- [A third staff member at the City of Ottawa-run Champlain Long Term Care Residence has tested positive for COVID-19](#). The home has been in outbreak status since a staff member tested positive for the virus on 11 September 2020. All affected staff are in self-isolation at home. The Peter D. Clark Long-Term Care Centre and the Garry J. Armstrong Home both remain in outbreak status due to positive staff results last week.
- [A University of Saskatchewan professor stated that the annual immunization may help keep pressure off the province's hospitals and COVID testing centres during the colder months, when some predict a 'second wave' of infections may arrive](#). The researcher indicated the Saskatchewan Health Authority SHA is also preparing for a different kind of immunization campaign, including possibly leveraging resources deployed for COVID-19 to get the shot into as many arms as possible. SHA and the Ministry of Health did not comment on how many doses of the flu vaccine they have ordered or exactly how it will be distributed. Health authorities commented that the big challenge is getting enough people to take the shot, and the flu vaccine is not a perfect; it is protective somewhere between 30 and 70 per cent of the time, which means a lot of people need to take it to stop the spread.
- [The Canadian government will sign on to a global vaccine procurement program](#) and by week's end, hopes to announce how much money it will pledge to the cause. Canada's Procurement Minister is set to announce further deals with vaccine developers on 22 September 2020 as the federal government seeks to make sure Canadians have access to a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as one is approved for use here. Canada is also joining the COVAX Facility, a vaccine-sharing program connected to international organizations including the World Health Organization and the Vaccine Alliance of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.
- [Ontario Government announced it will hire 98 new labour inspectors this fall as part of efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in workplaces](#). The hiring will increase the number of government inspectors from 409 to 507 and will cost \$11.6 million. Ontario's Labour Minister stated that the inspectors will allow the government to respond faster to situations that may arise during the pandemic.

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

- On 22 September 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention updated its [Guidance for Reopening Buildings After Prolonged Shutdown or Reduced Operation](#). Summary of changes include added guidance for lead and copper in building water systems with low or no use; added guidance for mold awareness, monitoring, and remediation during and after prolonged building shutdowns; updated *Legionella* guidance for people with weakened immune systems and the use of respiratory protection when flushing water systems.
- The [U.S. Food and Drug Administration is expected to soon announce new, higher standards for an emergency authorization of a coronavirus vaccine](#), lowering the chances that a vaccine might be cleared before the Nov. 3 election. According to the report, the FDA is expected to ask vaccine manufacturers seeking an emergency authorization to follow trial participants for a median of at least two months after they receive a second vaccine

shot. It also said the agency is asking that trials identify a specific number of cases of severe COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus, in patients treated with a placebo.

- On 21 September 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated its [FAQs for Wildland Firefighters](#). The best way to prevent COVID-19 is to avoid being exposed to SARS-CoV-2. All firefighters and support personnel should have a basic understanding of COVID-19, how the disease is thought to spread, what the symptoms of the disease are, and what measures can be taken to prevent or minimize the transmission of the virus that causes COVID-19. A series of Questions and Answers are provided to first responders and firefighters personnel under various circumstances.
- On 21 September 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated its guidance for [Holiday Celebrations](#). As many people in the United States begin to plan for fall and winter holiday celebrations, CDC offers the following considerations to help protect individuals, their families, friends, and communities from COVID-19. These considerations are meant to supplement—not replace—any [state, local, territorial](#), or [tribal](#) health and safety laws, rules, and regulations with which holiday gatherings must comply. When planning to host a holiday celebration, you should assess current COVID-19 levels in your community to determine whether to postpone, cancel, or limit the number of attendees.
- [According to a new poll, the number of Americans who say they will get the coronavirus vaccine as soon as it is available has fallen in the last month](#). While 39% of respondents said they would take the first generation vaccine, 60% say they will not take the vaccine as soon as it becomes available. Last month, the same pollster showed that the numbers were roughly split. The numbers have tanked for members of both parties; whereas last month 56% of Democrats said they plan to take the first-generation vaccine, now just 43% say they do. The CDC has also issued guidance to public health officials in all 50 states outlining a process to distribute vaccines to healthcare workers and high-risk groups in late October or early November 2020.

### **IHR Announcement – Invitation to Ministers to participate in the COVID-19 Information session on Thursday, 24 September 2020**

The WHO posted on their Event Information Site (EIS) the invitation to Ministers to participate in the COVID-19 Information session on Thursday, 24 September 2020, 12.30 CET.

### **[WHO - Weekly Epidemiological Update Coronavirus disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) - 21 September 2020 \(Official\)](#)**

The global epidemiological situation is presented. Besides, the report's key weekly updates are:

- WHO shared three messages during the virtual 75th UN General Assembly from 15- 31 September:
  1. Equitable access to COVID-19 tools. WHO calls on world leaders to support the [Access to COVID-19 Tools \(ACT\)-Accelerator](#), while strengthening health systems.
  2. Maintain the momentum towards achieving the [Sustainable Development Goals](#). According to [a recent WHO survey](#), 90% of countries are experiencing disruptions to essential health services.
  3. Countries must prepare for the next pandemic together, now. A year ago the independent Global Preparedness Monitoring Board warned of the threat of a pandemic, calling for global leaders to take urgent, united action to prepare. The Board has issued its 2020 report, '[A World in Disorder](#)', which outlined five urgent actions to be taken: responsible leadership; engaged citizenship; strong and agile systems for health security; sustained investment; and robust global governance of preparedness.
- WHO Director-General in his regular [media briefing](#) on 18 September highlighted that this is a critical moment for countries. As cases and deaths have started to spike again, the official called upon leaders to put targeted measures in place, which can help suppress the spread of the virus and ensure that health systems and workers are protected.
- WHO has published new guidance on [school-related public health measures](#) that examines considerations for school operations, and the measures needed to minimize the risk to students and staff of COVID-19.
- On 17 September 2020, countries celebrated [World Patient Safety Day](#) to raise global awareness of the importance of health worker safety and its interlinkages with patient safety. The COVID-19 pandemic has exerted unprecedented pressure on health systems worldwide.
- WHO has released a slide set on '[What we know about the long-term effects of COVID-19](#)'. Typically, people recover from COVID-19 after two to six weeks; however, for some people, including young adults and persons with no underlying medical conditions who were not hospitalized, symptoms may linger or recur for weeks or months following initial recovery. Much is still unknown, and more time and research are needed to understand the long-term effects of COVID-19.

### **[PAHO - PAHO reports more than 60,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in pregnant women, with 458 deaths \(Official\)](#)**

Since the first cases of COVID-19 in the Americas, 60,458 confirmed cases of COVID-19 were reported among pregnant women, including 458 deaths, or 1%, in 14 countries, according to a [new Epidemiological Update](#) from the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). PAHO has asked countries in the Americas to step up efforts to ensure access to prenatal care services for pregnant women, noting that recently published results and studies based on COVID-19 surveillance

data have indicated an increased risk among pregnant women of presenting with severe forms of COVID-19 and, therefore, of being hospitalized and admitted to intensive care units. The highest increase in cases was observed in Central America, with a 28% increase in cases and a 22% increase in deaths, followed by South America, with a 26% increase in cases and a 23% increase in deaths. The Caribbean and the Atlantic Ocean Islands reported a 24% increase in cases and a 34% increase in deaths, while North America, which includes the U.S., Canada and Mexico, showed a 16% increase in cases and a 12% increase in deaths, the report said. The report also noted increased cases in indigenous populations. Among indigenous populations, 11 countries reported 120,593 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 2,639 deaths since the previous epidemiological update of August 26. A relative increase in cases and deaths was observed in all the countries with available data, with Colombia representing the largest relative increase in cases and Ecuador representing the largest relative increase in deaths in indigenous populations, the report said. The report also noted that 16 countries have reported multisystem inflammatory syndrome (MIS) in children and adolescents, with 1,503 cases of MIS temporally related to COVID-19, including 43 deaths.

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

- According to media, [Russia expects to register a second potential vaccine against COVID-19 by 15 October 2020](#). The vaccine was developed by Siberia's Vector Institute, which completed early-stage human trials of the vaccine last week. Russia registered its first vaccine candidate, developed by Moscow's Gamaleya Institute, in August. Late-stage trials, involving at least 40,000 people, are continuing.
- [In United States at least 199,884 Americans are known to have died since the start of the pandemic](#), according to Johns Hopkins, which relies on official government data. With the worst death toll in the world, the US accounts for one in five coronavirus-related fatalities worldwide.
- [India, with more than 5.5 million cases the second-worst affected country](#), reported 75,083 new coronavirus infections in the lowest daily increase since 7 September 2020.
- On 21 September 2020, [Mexico surpassed 700,000 confirmed cases](#) after the health ministry reported 2,917 new confirmed cases in the Latin American country, bringing the total to 700,580 as well as a cumulative death toll of 73,697.
- [China reported six new Covid-19 cases on 21 September 2020](#), down from 12 a day earlier, the national health authority reported through the media.
- [Thailand found five new imported coronavirus cases](#), all detected in state quarantine, after people travelled from India and Switzerland.
- On 22 September 2020, [South Korea reported 61 new coronavirus cases](#), the third straight day that the increase has been below 100.
- Australian authorities reported that [Victoria, Australia's worst-hit state, reported a jump in new infections on 22 September 2020](#) with 28 new cases and three more deaths.
- [Greece reported 453 cases, a new daily high](#) since the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020.
- United Kingdom announced that starting 24 September 2020 [pubs, bars and restaurants in England will have to shut by 10pm under new nationwide restrictions](#) to halt an "exponential" rise in coronavirus cases. British Minister is expected to make an address to the nation on 22 September 2020 setting out the new measures.
- Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) [Chief Executive announced that the four-person limit on public gatherings and other social distancing measures will be extended](#) by a week to 1 October 2020.
- On 21 September 2020, [Czech Republic Prime Minister admitted that his government had made a mistake when it eased restrictions over the summer](#).
- [New Zealand recorded no new cases of Covid-19](#) on 22 September 2020, as restrictions on much of the country were entirely removed, and measures imposed on Auckland, the largest city, were due to ease further.
- [Japanese light equipment maker Ushio Inc. has recently launched an ultraviolet lamp that can kill the coronavirus without harming human health](#), the first of its kind in the world. The "Care 222" UV lamp, which Ushio developed together with Columbia University, is expected to be used for disinfection at occupied spaces where people keep coming in and out and the risk of contracting the deadly virus runs high, such as buses, trains, elevators and offices. The Care 222, when emitted from a ceiling, inactivates 99 percent of viruses and bacteria in the air and up to a 3-square-meter surface of objects some 2.5 meters away from the lamp, in six to seven minutes. Ushio's new lamp, however, emits the UV rays with a wavelength of 222 nanometers, as opposed to the conventional 254-nanometer wavelength, making them lethal to germs but benign to humans.
- On 21 September 2020, [Cuba's Deputy Prime Minister visited the Finlay Vaccine Institute of Havana to monitor the progress of the ongoing projects in the center, especially the country's vaccine against Covid-19, Soberana 01](#). Both leaders conducted an exchange of opinions with workers from the Finlay Institute and 'contributed important ideas that will help enrich the strategy of the Cuban vaccine against Covid-19,' the entity was referred on Twitter. This drug started human trials on 24 August 2020, when experts injected 20 individuals aged 19 to 59 years with it. A week later, they administered the med to a second group comprised of the same number of

volunteers from 60 to 80 years old. So far, the adverse effect reported is mild pain at the injection site, a common side effect for all vaccines.

- According to media, The [United Arab Emirates \(UAE\) has approved a China-developed COVID-19 vaccine for emergency use, six weeks after human trials in the Gulf Arab state started](#). In a tweet on 21 September 2020, the UAE's National Emergency Crisis and Disaster Management Authority announced "The vaccine will be available to our first line of defense heroes who are at the highest risk of contracting the virus." The move is aimed at helping to save millions of people's lives and offering health care to infected people as the country reported 777 new COVID-19 cases on 21 September 2020, bringing the total confirmed cases to 80,266. According to the country's top crisis authority, the vaccine had been tested on 31,000 volunteers, including 1,000 suffering from chronic diseases, and no complications occurred after vaccination.
- On 22 September 2020, [South Korea's National Medical Center data obtained by the office of a Rep. the People Power Party reported that 24 out of 80 patients hospitalized at the institution as of the end of April 2020 were diagnosed with mental illnesses including panic disorder, depression and stress disorder](#). This displays that around 30 percent of hospitalized COVID-19 patients in a sample experienced mental illness, raising concerns over the virus outbreak's impact on mental health. The data excludes confirmed patients who were already diagnosed with mental illness or dementia prior to being hospitalized for COVID-19. Twenty percent, or 16 patients, were prescribed medicine for psychological disorders. The data excludes confirmed patients who were already diagnosed with mental illness or dementia prior to being hospitalized for COVID-19.
- [China's General Administration of Customs announced emergency precautionary measures against a Norwegian aquatic product maker](#) after a sample of an imported frozen seafood package tested positive for the novel coronavirus. Starting from 23 September 2020 Chinese customs authorities will suspend accepting import applications related to the producer, branded as GADUS NJORD for a week.

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

- [The study, led by researchers at UC San Francisco, suggests that babies born to mothers infected with the virus generally do well six to eight weeks after birth; however, there was a higher rate of neonatal intensive care unit \(NICU\) admissions reported if the mothers had COVID-19 up to two weeks prior to delivery. While studies have reported that maternal SARS-CoV-2 infection increases the risk of preterm birth and can be transmitted from the mother to the infant, overall risks for the infants were not known and almost no information is available about how COVID-19 affects infants as they grow. Among 263 infants in the study, adverse outcomes — including preterm birth, NICU admission, and respiratory disease — did not differ between those born to mothers testing positive for SARS-CoV-2 and those born to mothers testing negative. The study is published as a prepublication accepted manuscript in \*Clinical Infectious Diseases\*.](#)
- [New Public Health England research suggests that people infected with both viruses between January and April were more at risk of severe illness and death](#). Three of the United Kingdom's senior medics are calling on all eligible people to be vaccinated against flu, as new research from Public Health England (PHE) suggests the risk of death more than doubled for people who tested positive for both flu and COVID-19, compared to those with COVID-19 alone. The research, looking at cases between January and April 2020, also found that those with co-infection of the two viruses were more at risk of severe illness. Most cases of co-infection were in older people and more than half of them died. This year, the programme is being expanded to help protect people from flu and ease pressure on the NHS and urgent care services. The health system is working to provide the free flu vaccine to 30 million people, the highest number on record. To help increase uptake in the social care sector, for the first time, pharmacists will be able to vaccinate residents and care home staff at the same time.
- On 22 September 2020, [Public Health England](#) posted its [Evaluating detection of SARS-CoV-2: AntiBodies at Home study](#). The EDSAB-HOME research study is evaluating the detection of SARS-CoV-2 antibodies using home testing kits. These kits called lateral flow immunoassays, appear similar to a pregnancy test kit and analyse a small amount of blood obtained from a finger prick. The study is being run by Public Health England at the request of the Department of Health and Social Care. Recruitment has now ceased, but the study is ongoing.
- [Investigators from the Virginia Commonwealth University \(VCU\) Massey Cancer Center are reporting an experimental cancer drug called AR-12 kills SARS-CoV-2](#). The discovery was published online in the journal [Biochemical Pharmacology](#). *According to the Scientists "AR12 is a derivative of celecoxib which no-longer acts against COX2 but instead inhibits the ATPase activity of multiple chaperone proteins, in particular GRP78. GRP78 acts as a sensor of endoplasmic reticulum stress and is an essential chaperone required for the life cycle of all mammalian viruses."*
- [Researchers uncover early results about an existing tuberculosis vaccine that has been hypothesized to help against the coronavirus](#). A team from UC Santa Barbara, and Paris-Saclay University, decided to examine existing public health data. The researchers compared the COVID-19 outcomes between the two groups and found that cases per capita, hospitalizations per capita, and deaths per capita were very similar for people born just before and just after the April 1st cut-off. While scientists race to develop and test a vaccine effective against

SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, recent studies have indicated that countries with widespread BCG vaccination appear to be weathering the pandemic better than their counterparts.

- According to the media, [an expert in the spread of coronavirus at the Niels Bohr Institute in Copenhagen, stated that Sweden might have beaten the pandemic](#). The scientist mentioned: there is some evidence that the Swedes have built up a degree of immunity to the virus which, along with what else they are doing to stop the spread. Sweden was initially criticised at the start of the outbreak after recording a spike in its mortality rates which was five times that of Denmark and ten times that of Norway and Finland. However, scientists believe that this may have helped it avoid a second wave of Covid-19 as it continues to record its lowest number of cases since March - with just 28 infections per 100,000 people.
- According to media, British government scientists conducted a research during the early months of the pandemic, and the results were troubling: 43% of patients who were hospitalized with both infections died, compared with 26.9% of people who were hospitalized for coronavirus infection alone. [The conclusions alert that having flu and COVID together doubles death risk in hospitalized patients](#). The study only followed 58 people between the months of January and April, the findings line up with similar research that is underway.
- [Two randomized, placebo-controlled clinical trials funded by the National Institutes of Health \(NIH\) are expanding enrollment to further evaluate convalescent plasma as a treatment for patients hospitalized with COVID-19](#). The trials are receiving \$48 million in support through Operation Warp Speed (OWS), a collaborative initiative across federal agencies to advance the development, manufacturing and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics. It contains antibodies that can recognize and neutralize SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, as well as other components that may contribute to an immune response.
- [A review of studies \(meta-analysis\) presented at this year's ESCMID Conference on Coronavirus Diseases \(ECCVID, online 23-25 September 2020\) shows that 40% of healthcare workers who test positive for COVID-19 were asymptomatic](#), raising the risk of silent transmission in healthcare settings. The study was led by a Scientist from the Cardiovascular Foundation of Colombia, and the Institute of Social and Preventive Medicine (ISPM), University Of Bern, Switzerland, and colleagues, and is to be published in the [American Journal of Epidemiology](#). The study shows that 48% of those testing positive for COVID-19 were nurses, followed by physicians (25%) and other HCW (23%). Most of the COVID-19 positive medical personnel were working in regular/non-surgical/non-COVID wards during the screening (43%), followed by 24% in the operating room, 16% in the emergency room and 9% in ICU, with 29% reporting 'other' locations.
- On 23 September 2020, [Fujifilm Holdings Corp announced the late-stage study of its antiviral drug Avigan showed it reduced recovery times for COVID-19 patients with non-severe symptoms](#), boosting expectations for regulatory approval in Japan. The government called on Fujifilm to triple national stockpiles of Avigan, approved in 2014 as an emergency flu treatment, and pledged to donate it to countries on request. The Phase 3 clinical study of 156 patients in Japan showed that those treated with Avigan improved after 11.9 days, versus 14.7 days for a placebo group.

## Domestic Events of Interest

### [Alberta - New street drug discovered after seizure sparks warning from Grande Prairie RCMP \(Media\)](#)

Grande Prairie RCMP is warning the public about a potential new street drug threat in the city after lab analysis on a recent seizure raised some serious concerns. According to the authorities, the suspected fentanyl was sent to a Health Canada laboratory for analysis. The results of the analysis indicated the presence of a substance known as 2-Fluorordeschloroketamine, along with fentanyl, MDMA, meth, and caffeine. Mounties say it is the first time 2-Fluorordeschloroketamine has been encountered in this city and is known to be associated with overdoses or deaths. Officials add there is an increased risk when different drugs are combined or with alcohol, and when the user is unaware of the content of the drugs they are consuming.

## International Events of Interest

### [Africa \(International\) - Deadly malaria and cholera outbreaks grow amongst refugees as COVID pandemic strains health systems, warns IRC – \(Official\)](#)

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) is extremely concerned about the rise of infectious diseases alongside COVID-19. There is an increase in malaria and cholera cases compared to previous years due in part to COVID-related disruptions severely impeding diagnosis and treatment of the diseases, access to relief from floods as well as affordability of mosquito nets. Apart from the strain on health facilities during the pandemic, in some countries such as Somalia, Kenya and Sierra Leone. IRC fears of exposure to COVID-19 has prevented parents from taking their children to hospital, delaying diagnosis and treatment of malaria and increasing preventable deaths. The IRC has been training local health care workers to recognize symptoms and safely support patients suffering from malaria, cholera and COVID-19. Still, health services in many countries are not fit to handle coinciding outbreaks of these diseases, an urgent support to scale up is necessary.

## Researches, Policies and Guidelines

### [Canada - International experts call for independent probe of Canadian research linking fluoride and lower IQ](#) (Media)

Several international experts have taken the unusual step of urging a Canadian university to arrange an independent investigation into [research that controversially linked fluoride in drinking water to lower intelligence in children](#). The academics and public health officials from six countries stated that studies by York University's scientists have been widely criticized yet are still influencing often-emotional debates over fluoridation in American and Canadian cities. An arm's-length review is needed to determine whether "ideology is being misrepresented as science," the group stated in a letter sent to York's University board on 21 September 2020. The letter indicated "The fact that the main researcher in the discussed research is using an [animated video](#) and [public comments](#) to advocate against pregnant women drinking fluoridated water, despite shortcomings in her research, makes this more than a simple scientific debate.

### [United States- FDA Launches the Digital Health Center of Excellence](#) (Official)

On 22 September 2020, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration announced it is launching the Digital Health Center of Excellence within the Center for Devices and Radiological Health (CDRH). The launch of the Digital Health Center of Excellence is an important step in furthering the agency's overarching dedication to the advancement of digital health technology, including mobile health devices, Software as a Medical Device (SaMD), wearables when used as a medical device, and technologies used to study medical products. The Digital Health Center of Excellence is primarily focused on helping both internal and external stakeholders achieve their goals of getting high quality digital health technologies to patients by providing technological advice, coordinating and supporting work being done across the FDA, advancing best practices, and reimagining digital health device oversight. Along those lines, the Digital Health Center of Excellence is creating a network of digital health experts and engaging in Collaborative Communities to share knowledge and experience concerning digital health issues and priorities with FDA staff.

### [WHO - WHO advisors urge flu vaccination to prioritize health workers, seniors](#) (Official)

The WHO Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) noted that flu transmission might have been altered by COVID-19 measures and limited travel due to travel restrictions, but the steps vary by country and flu transmission could rise and circulate alongside SARS-CoV-2 as steps are relaxed. Vaccine advisors to the World Health Organization (WHO) have released new interim guidance for flu vaccination during the COVID-19 pandemic, which slightly changes the order of the priority risk groups to put health workers at the top of the list, followed by older adults.

### [WHO - Tobacco responsible for 20% of deaths from coronary heart disease](#) (Official)

According to a new brief released on 22 September 2020 by the World Health Organization, World Heart Federation and the University of Newcastle Australia ahead of World Heart Day, marked on 29 September, every year, 1.9 million people die from tobacco-induced heart disease. This equates to one in five of all deaths from heart disease, warn the report's authors, who urge all tobacco users to quit and avoid a heart attack, stressing that smokers are more likely to experience an acute cardiovascular event at a younger age than non-smokers. The brief also shows that smokeless tobacco is responsible for around 200 000 deaths from coronary heart disease per year. E-cigarettes also raise blood pressure increasing the risk of cardiovascular disease. Moreover, high blood pressure and heart disease increase the risk of severe COVID-19. A recent WHO survey found that among people dying of COVID-19 in Italy, 67% had high blood pressure and in Spain, 43% of people who developed COVID-19 were living with heart disease. Governments can help tobacco users quit by increasing tax on tobacco products, enforcing bans on tobacco advertising and offering services to help people give up tobacco.

### [Vaping - Vaping in pregnancy increases risk of having a child with behavioural issues, study finds](#) (Media)

The authors of the study warn that exposure to flavoured electronic vaping chemicals in the womb leads to hyperactive offspring, while those with nicotine cause even more dramatic changes to a growing foetus' grey matter. The scientists tested the effects of flavoured blue raspberry and cinnamon and unflavored vape liquids with and without nicotine. Lead author Professor stated: "Vape flavourings dull sensory perception and cause hyperactivity in developing zebrafish embryos." Experiments on zebrafish indicate it harms the developing structure of a baby's brain. Embryonic development is surprisingly similar in the humble marine creature.

### [Study - Potential hand, foot and mouth disease drug candidate identified](#) (Media)

According to media, a study will be published next week (Week of 27 September 2020) in the journal Nature Communications offers some good news in the search for antiviral drugs for hard-to-treat diseases. The study identified a potential new drug candidate against enterovirus 71, a common cause of hand, foot and mouth disease in infants and young children. The compound of interest is a small molecule that binds to RNA, the virus's genetic material, and changes its 3-D shape in a way that stops the virus from multiplying without harming its human host. There are currently no FDA-approved drugs or vaccines for enterovirus 71, which affects hundreds of thousands of children each year,

particularly in Southeast Asia. While most people get better within 7 to 10 days after suffering little more than a fever and rash, severe cases can cause brain inflammation, paralysis and even death.

#### **[Brazil - Evidence for current circulation of an ancient West Nile virus strain \(NY99\) in Brazil \(Study\)](#)**

The study published in BioRxiv on 21 September 2020, indicated that West Nile virus (WNV) was first detected in 2018 from horses with neurological disease. The researchers present the first reported case in Ceará state and complete genome sequence from an isolate in Espírito Santo state from 2019. Phylogenetic analysis reveals that this isolate belongs to lineage 1a, clustering with NY99 strain, that disappeared from the USA since 2005. The study concluded that current findings reinforce the hypothesis that WNV has been silently circulating in Brazil for many years.

#### **[Japan – Study finds Japanese stewardship guidelines did not lessen antibiotic use \(Study\)](#)**

National guidelines to promote the appropriate use of antibiotics in Japan had no effect on trends in antibiotic use for patients with acute respiratory tract infection (ARTI) and gastroenteritis, Japanese researchers reported on 22 September 2020 in Infection Control and Hospital Epidemiology. Using data from a national claims database from June 2016 to June 2018, researchers from the University of Tokyo examined antibiotic use for ARTI or gastroenteritis among outpatients 6 years and older. A total of 13,177,735 patients with ARTI and 300,565 patients with gastroenteritis were evaluated in the 2-year study period. The findings indicate that the issue of national guidelines may not be an immediately effective intervention to change the prescribing behaviors of general practitioners, and suggests the importance of further multifaceted strategies to promote optimal antimicrobial use.

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

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