

Omicron Update: Preparing for the Post-Holiday Surge Q&A

Jan 4, 2022

Disclaimer: Thank you for posing your questions during the webinar. The panelists have made their best attempt to answer each question based on their expert knowledge and opinion. Due to rapidly changing information please consider these answers to be based on current findings. The answers shared below may not be relevant in the future when new information emerges.

Due to the large number of questions, the Q&A log has been categorized based on key terms.

Categories

- Hospitalization
- Isolation
- Masks
- PPE
- Resources
- Symptoms
- Testing
- Treatment
- Vaccine
- Ventilation
- Misc
- Virtual billing codes

Category	Question	Answer
Hospitalization	Are we seeing increased hospitalizations and ICU Admits with Omicron? (Here and in different areas where omicron has already peaked?)	Some increase in places w/ worse Omicron like UK but it hasn't been as bad or severe as Delta - UK is at ~1/4 - 1/3 of total peak hospitalizations they experienced in Jan 2021

Hospitalization	I could be completely out there but, If Omicron if a less virulent strain causing community infection and not translating to hospitalizations and ICU admissions, should we not let it run its course and provide some natural immunity for further strains of the virus?	No jurisdiction is saying no measures are needed - even if less severe if we lifted all measures we could seriously spike hospitalizations given the extremely high infectiousness
Hospitalization	Is the virulence (hospitalization, ICU and death rates) different for omicron vs delta and previous variants?	Yes, Omicron appears less severe (50-70% lower change of hospitalization) compared to Delta
Hospitalization	Are we seeing increases in pediatric hospitalizations and PICU updates?	Emergency departments are all busier. We will have hospitalization data tomorrow.
Hospitalization	Do we have any data regarding hospitalization and ICU admissions v vaccine status, ie none, one dose etc?	vaccine outcomes on AH page https://www.alberta.ca/stats/covid-19-alberta-statistics.htm#vaccine-outcomes
Hospitalization	Isn't the only useful Rapid Test result a positive one? If we don't see an uptick in hospitalizations and ICU admissions in the next couple of weeks then should we consider just throwing in the towel? I'm not convinced that the measures that are being implemented are really going to mitigate the impact of this variant and the return will be far outweighed by the time, effort and money spent towards that end.	Well, this is what makes it hard to know what to do - it could be that Omicron is really mild and we don't need to do much, or it could be that its only 60% less severe in which case we would definitely flood our hospitals - so there's no easy answers
Isolation	Does the new 5 day isolation period for COVID-19 positive apply to Health Care Workers?	Yes I believe so
Isolation	For omicron and the surge in cases what do we tell our patients about quarantine period is it going to stay at 10 days for symptomatic people, how about people who are doubly vaccinated, how about asymptomatic contacts who are doubly vaccinated?	Isolation period for cases has decreased to 5 days if fully immunized - see here for details: https://www.alberta.ca/isolation.aspx

Isolation	Is there actual evidence behind the drop of isolation time with positive vaxxed cases from 10 days to 5 days? I know that vaxxed should have lower viral load and should shed for shorter time, but has this actually been proven--or is it because businesses need their workers, and that a shorter time will be better complied with?	Yes there is: https://www.cnbc.com/2021/12/28/dr-fauci-cdcs-reduced-isolation-time-will-get-people-back-to-jobs.html - there are obviously tradeoffs though, but given the number of jurisdictions doing this I think it's a reasonable thing for AB to do
Isolation	Would isolation requirements be different for triple vaxxed/boosted folk - public or health care workers?	No
Isolation	Dr Rosana Salvaterra: please provide the evidence for the decreased isolation requirements from 10 to 5 days	Answered above
Isolation	Given the 10 to 5 day change for isolation for Positive patients who are vaccinated, and the shorter incubation time that Omicron seems to have - will the 14 days quarantine for close contacts who aren't fully vaccinated (esp children) be updated also?	See here for details: https://www.alberta.ca/isolation.aspx but other jurisdictions like ON have said 5 or 10 day isolation for close contacts
Isolation	I thought that the 5d isolation was based on Delta variant data, not from Omicron and that there isn't data regarding omicron yet	Answered above
Isolation	Why are they shortening isolation based on omicron if there is still currently significant Delta spread?	There isn't much Delta anymore

Mask	Should patients in community settings like primary care be given medical masks to wear while in clinic if they come wearing their own cloth mask?	Preferable medical masks per Dr Slocombe
Mask	Why are N95s not being mandated in healthcare?	live answered
Mask	Should we now be wearing N95 masks for all patient encounters in a clinical setting?	This will be discussed in presentation - great questions!

Mask	<p>I am a family physician in a small practice in rural south Calgary. I find myself on a daily basis struggling with non maskers or those that will continue to use a mask incorrectly.</p> <p>The person(s) strongly believe they are correct in so doing or have a right to be respected for even trying to use a mask. Any recommendations are met with petulance and irritation and makes for ongoing difficulty in continuing the visit.</p> <p>If these are non urgent cases to what end does a person act on this or not; and what is an appropriate response. Meetings with management have not been beneficial to remedy this.</p>	<p>I think that if you can convert these visits to virtual that would be ideal. We really sympathize with the fact that you have to deal w/ these patients</p>
Mask	<p>Can we double mask if N95 recommended but difficult to purchase</p>	<p>Anything that increases mask fit will increase protection (this is part of the reason N95s are better than surgical masks) - but if you do have availability for N95/KN95 then use that preferentially</p>
Mask	<p>Where is the funding for N95s for community practices?</p>	<p>AH will be providing PPE for community practices</p>
Mask	<p>We need the AMA and the ACFP to advocate for safe school openings: 1) N95s for kids 2) not going back to in person unless double vaxxed 3) boosters for teachers prioritized, 4) ventilation assessments for each classroom 5) filtration allowed in all classes.</p> <p>Will the AMA and ACFP advocate for these things?</p>	<p>AMA continues to advocate for safe school openings for both staff and students. This was discussed during the Fall Representative Forum</p> <p>https://www.albertadoctors.org/services/media-publications/presidents-letter/pl-archive/call-for-stronger-measures-to-combat-covid-19</p>
Mask	<p>how many hours can N95 masks be used for if clean and dry. I've heard they are effective for ~40h</p>	<p>https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/ppe-strategy/decontamination-reuse-respirators.html</p>

Mask	how do we order the KN95 and N95 masks?	KN95 will be available through the ordering process that will be posted on AHS website very soon that PCNs will use. Please be aware an Order Form is currently available however the 'no cost' form is to be uploaded very soon. Thank you for your PCNs effort to help with this.
Mask	Is it possible please to have PCN help us to get KN95 / PPE as before for community clinics?	Yes, this is the goal. PCNs helped a tremendous amount in previous waves with distributing PPE.
Mask	Is a KN95 recommended for face-to-face interaction with a symptomatic patient who has tested negative for covid via rapid antigen or PCR? Or is a medical mask the recommendation in this case?	I mean, if they're negative on PCR I think unlikely to have COVID-19; less certain if negative on RAT - do what you think is best based on this
Mask	So, if people are very likely to be infectious in the 2-3d prior to symptoms, why are we not recommending KN95 or N95 for all doctors for all patients even without symptoms - curious in your opinion, thanks.	See above answer fro Raj Bhardwaj's question
Mask	can you reuse k 95 next day ?	Further guidance forthcoming on this
Mask	I heard the question on how long can use KN95 or N95 mask. What about "home decontamination" (eg with heat). Apparently there are suggestions on internet on how to do this. Is this effective? Does it maintain mask integrity?	Further guidance forthcoming on this

PPE	In looking at the updated guidance on the AMA page, PPE supply per 1 FTE physician indicates 60 KN95 masks. So, do clinics order on behalf of their physicians and request the amount based on the total physician FTEs ?	Please refer to following resource the https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/ppih/if-ppih-covid-19-ppe-distribution.pdf
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PPE	Why does our provincial government continue to be reactive, as opposed to proactive, in dealing with COVID? One only needs to look to Ontario and Quebec for what is about to happen here, with the 5th wave	To be fair - I'd say that Alberta reacted significantly to Omicron about 1.5 weeks later than ON - at a time when our cases and theirs were fairly similar adjusted for population. Omicron is just really, really fast...
PPE	What is the evidence that full PPE is required rather than just a respirator?	Eyeshield is good since we know eyes are mucous membranes
PPE	Limited time, no-cost PPE distribution to community medical providers: https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/ppih/if-ppih-covid-19-ppe-distribution.pdf	Thank you
PPE	What about free PPE for community psychiatry?	
PPE	will the PPE be available to PCN staff who work in the medical homes as well?	Yes. The no cost PPE is available for PCN clinics and PCN affiliated clinics, for the workers there. (includes pediatric clinics)
PPE	Will PPE be available to community specialists at no cost too?	Discussed in webinar
PPE	To clarify, should docs be wearing eye protection with all face-to-face patients?	I would
PPE	Why are specialists not included in the distribution of PPEs?	Discussed in webinar
PPE	Do specialist that provide care qualify ofr the PPE?	Discussed in webinar
PPE	To clarify, are family physicians being asked to see COVID-19 positive patients in our community offices, given that Omicron variant is airborne? Besides our own PPE, what is the suggestion for us to protect our other vulnerable patients coming into the office? How are family medicine clinics doing this?	No - try to avoid in-person visits for those with Sx or known COVID-19
PPE	If the Ministry of Health pays Physicians, then doesn't AH have an obligation to provide PPE to physicians under that law? Or not, because we are "contractors"?	AH is providing PPE

PPE	What about radiology clinics will we be provided with PPE we cant do much virtual care	Question asked above
Resources	Given the increase in breakthrough infections with Omicron, will there be any change in guidance regarding HCW as close contacts not having to be work restricted? Currently, HCW who are fully vaccinated aren't considered close contacts but wondering if that may change?	Currently not but this is being evaluated on a daily basis
Resources	How do you recommend we document a postive RAT that a patient reports? Is it enough just to note on their chart based on their word? Should we be getting a photo etc?	Discussed in webinar
Resources	How do you suggest patients document results of RAT ?	Discussed in webinar
Resources	these links/documents are going to be posted on the public side of the AMA website ?	Yes
Resources	Please would you give the link to the guidance document for providers?	https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/ppih/if-ppih-covid-19-primary-care-guidance.pdf
Symptoms	The isolation guideline says to isolate for 5 days if fully vaccinated or "until symptoms resolve," whichever is longer. Previously I was telling patients to cease isolation after 10 days as long as symptoms were improving. Many patients have lingering congestion/cough for weeks. Are they supposed to continue isolating according to how this is worded? We will be getting tons of questions from patients about this and return to work.	In this case, if they're symptomatic but improved by Day 10 I'd free them there. Furthermore, a few more details on Isolation available here: https://www.alberta.ca/isolation.aspx e.g., you can only release someone after 5 days if they are also fully immunized
Symptoms	What is the incubation of the omicron variant? time from exposure to first symptoms.	Median incubation thought to be a bit shorter, maybe 3 days vs 5?

Symptoms	How can we best help those with persisting symptoms of fatigue, malaise, cough, that keep going for a few weeks?	If it's just a few weeks I wouldn't do much, if its >12 weeks can refer to the post-COVID clinic
Symptoms	with respect to Point of Care Risk assesement: How can anyone be presumed NOT to have Covid if so many people are asymptomatic or minimally symptomatic?	Good question - right now about 2/3 of symptomatic PCRs are negative for COVID, so most people with symptoms don't have COVID, but still 1/3 positive is very high
Symptoms	Has the CMOH specifically advised the government to take steps to improve air filtration in AB schools ie HEPA filters, CO2 monitors etc. Given students will be highly infectious 2 days before symptoms this is important?	It's a bit more complicated than just putting in HEPAs, which probably won't help that much. You'd ideally want to improve ventilation across the board (e.g., air exchanges / hour) but this often takes months/years to do

Testing	Please clarify what the best use is of the rapid test kits available to the public via pharmacies.	Some uses include: (1) Testing everyone before a social gathering; (2) Serial testing if exposed; (3) Serial testing as a requirement to attend work in person
Testing	Wondering how long covid positive folks are exempt from rapid antigen testing in work settings	It depends on the workplace but I'd say if someones COVID+ I would say that they shouldn't be re-tested for at least 90 days as we don't think reinfection happens within 90 days
Testing	If you have tested positive for covid, do you still need to do rapid antigen testing at work if you have a work rapid antigen testing program?	Live answered
Testing	What is sthe long-term plan for longCOVID? Especially now that our politics are allowing the virus to run rampant? This will be maanged in community - but there are so few resources - and how will the patients confirm the Dx without having had PCR for this (huge) wave?	We discussed this at our last webinar, some of the things that could be done include use of infection-specific antibody testing -
Testing	should our clinics be doing regular rapid testing? if not all members of clinic want to participate can we still apply for those of us who do?	I think it's never a bad idea to do regular RATs, and yes you can apply even if not everyone wants RATs

Testing	what is the sensitivity and specificity of the available rapid antigen test in detecting Omicron infection?	We haven't validated rapid tests antigens Omicron but I'd assume its the same as for Delta and other prior variants.
Testing	What is the non-immunized rate?	Kyla, please refer to Dr Salvaterra's slide when it gets posted on the AMA website, under the COVID tab. https://www.albertadoctors.org/services/media-publications/webinars-online-learning/past-ama-webinars-covid-19
Testing	Where can private office based psychiatrist like myself find Rapid Antigen testing packs. I'd like to see patients in person - particularly for all patients who are triple vaccinated like myself, and I believe that in person appointments are better than virtual appointments when it comes to psychiatry/mental health support or treatment. Some patients are telling me that they can't get privacy on ZOOM from their families or significant others when those persons are part of their stressors. Psychiatrists need to get back to in person appointments.	Live answered - AMA to work with AH to discuss how specialist clinics can access PPE and testing
Testing	Rapid antigen tests are not widely available in Calgary. What is the government doing to improve access? The website is not updated and the private vaxhunter twitter account is the only reliable way to find them.	Governments are trying their best to source large amounts of rapid tests for all - again, frustrating when you can't access them but at least they're easier to get in AB than in ON. I'd expect them to be easier to get as we have better supply/demand match
Testing	Rapid antigen tests are NOT widely available. They are impossible to find for free at pharmacies and very expensive for patients to access privately. Can pulbic health MDs please stop stating that RAT are 'widely available'? what are the plans to increase access at ALL Albertans?	Dr Salvaterra addressed this one - thanks for the questions

Testing	<p>1) Can you comment on the current turnaround for obtaining Covid PCR tests in high risk groups (including health care workers)</p> <p>2) Other than staying isolated for 5 days, if symptomatic people cannot get access to Rapid tests, any other actions they are supposed to take? Rapid access tests are hard to access, by the way, for many people as pharmacies ran out quickly</p>	<p>(1) Fluctuating a lot, I've heard ~3 days, but this depends where you are. This will improve as we further prioritize HCW/high-risk people (2) Stay home, monitor for more severe symptoms and seek medical help if they need it</p>
Testing	<p>Rapid antigen tests are certainly NOT “widely available” in the communities. What is being done to address this?</p>	<p>Answered above</p>
Testing	<p>When will we get test kits delivered to rural communities and how will they be distributed?</p>	<p>Answered above</p>
Testing	<p>How should positive rapid antigen tests be documented? Is govt working on a centralized database to report to? How will this work medico-legally for insurance purposes etc esp for long covid?</p>	
Testing	<p>For individuals who are not vaccinated (no QR code), but have tested positive for SARS-Cov-2 in the past month, what is the guidance for entering businesses and how should we handle their presentation for other reasons to our clinics?</p>	<p>They need a negative test within the last 72 hours to enter businesses enrolled in the REP</p>
Testing	<p>For the new 5 day isolation rule for immunized people who test + for COVID, are health care workers and those working in high risk settings that are non-health (ie: shelter staff) an exception to this? ie: these staff are still required to isolate for 10 days if covid+ unless there is an exemption from MOH due to service disruption because of staff shortages.</p>	<p>No, HCWs and other high-risks need only isolate for 5 days like everyone else if fully immunized and no longer symptomatic</p>

Testing	Where do we source these health care worker rapid tests?	https://www.alberta.ca/rapid-testing-program-for-employers-and-service-providers.aspx (sorry Michael, I don't seem to be able to enter live links - pls copy and paste into your browser)
Testing	Should we still be trying to separate people with Omicron from the other members of their household (e.g separate bedrooms and bathroom), or is it futile?	Yes - still try, it's not futile. I know many people who have Omicron who don't give it to their entire family
Testing	Are PCN HCW included in the availability of rapid tests?	Yes
Testing	can rapid antigen tests be used post infection... young adults with minimal symptoms tests positive on a rapid, isolates for 5 days could a rapid test at this point provide information on their individual viral load and risk of infecting others	Sure you can
Testing	Is there a site where the public can report if they self test positive for covid, so that a more accurate case number can be achieved?	Not yet - we (and the other provinces and other jurisdictions around the world) believe that we identify ~20-25% of cases via PCR (when we do subsequent antibody studies) - so I think what's going to happen now is that our proportion of identified cases is lower, but given the rapid surge in cases it's not feasible to keep up w/ the PCR testing for all
Testing	I have nonvaccinated patients asking for molnupiravir or paxlovid rx already. Is paxlovid coming soon as i hear it is more effective. also, is a positive rapid test good enough for Sotrovimab iv if indicated.	If patient is transplant patient, sotrovimab can be order but will need confirmatory test by health care provider before being given. If not transplant - we are still requiring PCR but these patients are prioritized on the testing booking tool
Testing	Positive RAT - why is there no formal way for patients to report their RAT to AHS via a database that will allow for more accurate covid case count in community since most people don't qualify for a PCR test.	A trade-off between work required to develop reporting systems (which would further overwhelm lab/AHS/health system) vs. doing as many tests as possible

Testing	Rapid antigen tests are not that "readily available" with delayed deliveries to public health offices and pharmacies that do not have supply. Patients are being declined PCR. What is your advice for patients who require proof of positive status for insurance or medical leave, particularly in the case of long-COVID?	We're working on this - for example WCB is now saying rapid tests are okay
Testing	I see that Dr Hu responded to a question regarding avoiding re-testing persons who were covid-pos for 90 days with rapid antigen tests. This seems in contradiction with the AHS site that indicates that if a person tests COVID-pos with RAT, but remains asymptomatic, they are to continue retesting and are released from isolation once covid-neg. See attached under "positive result no symptoms". How long does PCR vs RAT remain positive post infection??	It depends right - like in most people they test will be negative within a week or two... some people can have positive testing for many weeks after but they tend to be quite immunocompromised. The 90 day thing is based on a belief people generally aren't going to get reinfectd within 90 days if that makes sense?
Testing	How often is it recommended that HCW get rapid testing as a household contact of a positive case?	If you have the RATs I'd do it daily if possible
Testing	Should health care providers who contract COVID get a PCR test if rapid antigen test is positive.	Yes. Dr Salvaterra explained that HCW PCR testing is available.
Testing	I've heard that with Omicron, it's more sensitive if you do a rapid antigen test by swabbing the throat in addition to each nare. Thoughts?	I've heard this too, I tend to use the tests as the manufacturer recommends, but it wouldn't hurt to swab a throat as well
Testing	should we be testing our clinic staff twice a wk even if they are asymptomatic	you don't have to but I think it's a good idea. If staff are symptomatic they should get PCR testing as HCWs (and you can also do RATs too)
Testing	Could you describe what 'long droplet' transmission is? How do we protect our administrative clinic staff members who greet our patients at front desk?	You mean aerosol spread? Best protection is well-fitting mask
Testing	Can PCN help to distribute Employer Testing Kits	Discussed in webinar

Testing	i object strongly to the idea the testing burden will be shifted towards FP. This involves bringing potentially infected pt into our medical offices rather than a well ventilated vehicle occupied patient testing site or providing adequate home testing.	Point taken, we're trying our best to figure out optimal balance of documentation vs. testing
Testing	In follow up this application for rapid test program-is for any business. Are we not provided a more rapid access for "health care worker rapid tests or I'd this it. Same priority as retail/oil and gas etc.?	Not yet but good idea
Testing	In the simplified guidance for clinic staff handling calls, if i'm following correctly, it seems to say if PT SAYS YES to symptoms but then NO to testing, it says " Isolate and book COVID test at AHS testing site". I thought if they weren't high risk the were to do home RAT test if they have one. Can you please clarify? Thanks Nicola Chappell	Correct - now it's do RAT at home if not high-risk
Testing	If HCW has a close contact, how do they test before work if RAT unavailable?	Try and book a PCR or use RAT, but I understand its hard to get these days
Testing	Given the volume of patients testing positive,are we still expected to call these patients as per current protocols? This will be a HUGE burden on those in primary care in addition to our regular duties	No - do what you can
Testing	Why did the government abandon population PCR testing prior to a robust RAT access system? Given we only test 5 figures daily and have the capacity for 22k tests	We didn't abandon it, every government is just overwhelmed
Testing	I've heard that doing throat, then nasal swab with RAT is more likely to pick up Omicron. ALOT of false negatives with RAT. Is there any research supporting doing throat then nose swab?	Answered above

Testing	Is there a guidance for if you have been recently Covid positive? Future isolation testing guidance	Yes - primary care pathway, AH isolation & quarantine guidelines
Testing	Is it not covid pcr detecting seasonal flu too ? i.e. flu cases are missing	It doesn't detect influenza - we do surveillance testing and have very little influenza
Testing	Please can you address live: there is a contradiction between responses re whether covid positive HCW are exempt from rapid antigen testing for 90 days or not -	Very few HCWs are part of mandated testing programs, it will depend on your organizational policy
Testing	Some PCNs do not have the ability to work well as a hub (no shipping dock/limited hrs and accessibility because of skeletal staff working in office or located within "malls" that have short access hours. Has there been consideration of medical homes ordering direct from CPSM?	
Testing	positive asymptomatic testing on RAT . did the chart state to repeat after 24 hours and if negative then assume negative? I can't find that chart of positive/neg RAT on the documents.	Oh if you have a positive RAT I'd just assume that's positive since FPs are very rare...
Testing	what do you advice re travel notes stating covid infection and testing (+). And the test is on RAT?	Further guidance on travel forthcoming
Testing	Is there evidence for the yield for Omicron testing being more sensitive a throat rather than a nose swab? Should we encourage patients to do both, and if yes, which do we do first?	Answered above
Testing	During the second and third waves, Alberta routinely completed >20,000 tests. Why is Dr. Salvaterra implying a lack testing capacity?	Since there's massive supply / demand mismatch

Treatment	When will Paxlovid and monoclonal antibodies be widely available?	oral antivirals not anticipated until later in January with Paxlovid not likely coming until Feb/March - still not Health Canada approved.
Treatment	Isn't the NNT for the monoclonal like 1/100?	FDA says its 16: https://www.fda.gov/media/150130/download
Treatment	who can get sotrovimab	http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page17753.aspx this website goes through eligibility
Treatment	If a patient qualifies for receiving sotrovimab how do we get them access to it?	if they have PCR positive - they can go to the website to get additional info and the number at Health Link to call is a dedicated line for this program http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page17753.aspx
Treatment	Sotrovimab duration and route for community treatment And when is this available	See above answers for accessing Sotrovimab

Vaccine	For people who have not received their booster and develop COVID. How soon after the infection are you recommending the booster?	As soon as patient isn't an active COVID-19 case (e.g., 10 days after infection)
Vaccine	What is the protection offered by a third dose of the mRNA vaccines compared to a second dose?	4 months after 2 doses of mRNA - protection against infection is ~35%; after a booster this rises to ~75-85%
Vaccine	Moderna is working on variant specific vaccines. If they prove more effective will they be available in Canada?	we don't have information yet on these vaccines. Health Canada will advise when there is more information
Vaccine	Is the Novavax option coming soon. It seems to have been held up for over a year now. What is the delay due to?	Novavax only recently applied for authorization, so it would likely have to do with them making sure they have all the data for an appropriate clinical trial submission to Health Canada

Vaccine	I have a number of patients whose first dose of vaccine was AZ, followed by an mRNA . This fall, they received another mRNA, in anticipation of travel outside of the country. These individuals are now asking if they would benefit from a 4th dose of vaccine. Has any thought been given to this situation?	it is under discussion but no 4th dose at present
Vaccine	if someone received one dose of COVID vaccine and get COVID infection after, how long after he can get the second dose of vaccine. Second infection.....COVID pfizer vaccine.....any reported side effect of UC in kids?	See above re: timing of doses after infection; no major side effects in the 5-11 year olds from US data
Vaccine	Why are people asked to mix and match booster doses even though they are both mrna. My experience in the community is that it increases vaccine heistancy. E.g pfizer 1, pfizer 2, then booster moderna. I think it is better to keep to pfizer full dose protocol or moderna full dose rather than moving people in between	limited evidence that shows that mix and match actually increases immune response. Also better to have any booster rather than wait given abundance of moderna supply.
Vaccine	While all work places require proof of vaccination for entry, why physician offices have to see all patients including non vaccinated ?	We should care for patients despite their vaccination status in the same way we care for lots of patients who make other poor lifestyle choices - though I understand this is frustrating
Vaccine	Would you recommend children 5-11 years old to get their booster dose <8 weeks at this stage to get protection earlier? Or is it still better to wait the 8 weeks?	best at 8 weeks for second dose. No booster yet recommended for 5-11 year old
Vaccine	If someone got AZ + Pf + Pf does that count as "boosted" or should people seek out another dose if they're 4-6 months out from their last dose?	3rd dose of MRNA not recommended as yet. continues to be under discussion
Vaccine	Given omicron and effectiveness with 2nd dose, should we be atleast vaccinate the younger children for their 2nd dose sooner than the 8wks recommended?	8 weeks remains the recommendation as it provides the best immune response

Vaccine	What's the definition of "vaccine effectiveness" in the UK study cited by Dr. Salvaterra?	https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1044481/Technical-Briefing-31-Dec-2021-Omicron_severity_update.pdf
Vaccine	So I understand: Are you advocating moderna booster after double pfizer vaxx?	recommending getting any mRNA which is available for a booster
Vaccine	Any evidence that Booster 3rd dose is effective in controlling the spread of Omicron variant?	Yes - see above for vaccine efficacy data
Vaccine	Can you also comment on MIS in children unable to get vaccine? What should we be doing for daycare?	Not seen data for MIS-C incidence among Omicron
Vaccine	Can point of care questions for in person appts be done the day before, include questions about vaccination status and or symptoms in addition to day of with symptoms and temp checks?	I would ask day of as opposed to day before since Sx can chane within a day
Vaccine	When will GoA acknowlege airborne spread of Omicron? Given rampant community spread—and 1/3 children asymptomatic —how should we be advocating for children, especially those too young for vaccine re schools/daycare spread?	That's why we're using N95s for HCWs seeing suspect COVID-19
Vaccine	When will there be antibody testing available to determine individual response? Dont we think that having access to antbody testing like they do in Germany will help encourage vaccine access if there is cut off for level of antibody which is accepted or not? I have patients requesting to know thier antibody level.	We have this available in limited quantities if there is a clinical reason - page the virologist-on-call if interested
Vaccine	Are companies going forward with Omicron-specific vaccine formulas, like they said they'd be able to? If so, any possible dates for availability?	They say they are

Vaccine	THE TERM VACCINE HESITANCY ASSUMES ACCESS. WHY HAVE WE NOT LEARNED THAT ACCESS IS PROBLEMATIC?	1400 pharmacies, 130 AHS sites, over 300 outreach initiatives have been in place. Many Additional community initiatives. If you have more suggestions - feel free to suggest. also many family physicians were providing - and encouraged
Vaccine	For the 5 day isolation for "fully immunized" - is that 2 doses or 3? What about for children 5-11?	It's 2 doses
Vaccine	Does fully immunized mean 2 doses or only those with boosters?	fully immunized means 2 doses of recommended vaccines at present
Vaccine	what is the advice for timing of the third dose of vaccine (booster) for those who currently have covid?	6 months after 2nd dose - if the person has covid now - they should wait until they are off isolation and feeling well
Vaccine	It looks like anyone who qualifies for sotrovimab qualifies for PCR -- so that's quite a few patients (at least up north where vaccination rates are lower)	those who are eligible for sotrovimab are also prioritized for testing. We are finding lots of people who did not want vaccines - now dont want sotrovimab. Not surprising.
Vaccine	Any evidence supporting booster vaccinations for age 5-18?	NACI did not recommend boosters for this age group at this time based on lack of current evidence.
Vaccine	is it feasible for ahs and media to report severe cases stratified by vaccine status - leverage the report to promote vaccination?	those stats are on the AH website https://www.alberta.ca/stats/covid-19-alberta-statistics.htm#vaccine-outcomes
Vaccine	Dr nijssen-jordan: question is suggestion to ahs to report as headliner rather than expect patients to study that starts on vaccine status	thanks - will suggest to Communications!
Vaccine	Regarding booster, doesn't getting covid after 2 vaccines give you a whopping booster? Is the 3rd vax/booster really still necessary after break-through infection	Yes the more the better

Ventilation	Given the risk of now acknowledge aerosol spread, is there any recommendation for schools to install hepa filters or other air modifications? Many old schools with limited ventilation and standard CBE comment is equity for all with no installation of filters (as in Ontario), now that acknowledged..	Evidence for HEPA is marginal, but I don't think it's a bad idea
Ventilation	Should HEPA filters be recommended given airborne transmission? Especially in long term care, acute care, clinics and schools?	HEPA benefits are pretty marginal, but it's not a bad idea if you want to do something that won't hurt but might help a bit
Ventilation	How do we ensure appropriate HVAC systems?	What setting are you referring to? HVAC is complicated and depends on a number of factors and requires quite a lot of money and time to upgrade generally

Misc	In rural remote communities, what are parameters or clinical situations for arranging COVID medivacs in a timely manner?	I'm not sure - call RAAPID
Misc	To each organization: do you believe the government's omicron response is A) sufficient and B) evidence-based?	Live answered
Misc	Can we please get a copy of the slide deck sent to us or access it after to share with our colleagues? Thank you	The recording and deck will be posted on the AMA site. https://www.albertadoctors.org/services/media-publications/webinars-online-learning/past-ama-webinars-covid-19#omicron
Misc	Any truth to the "There's only ever been 1 confirmed death from Omicron" that patients are talking about? And that "the ones dying now have Delta"?	No there are more than 1 death from Omicron: https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-reports-leap-10000-confirmed-omicron-coronavirus-cases-2021-12-18/
Misc	Any data on MIS-C with omicron?	I have yet to see any studies on MIS-C incidence specifically from Omicron
Misc	Any news on the new VOC -Mu discovered in France ?	The new French Variant has 46 mutations (it's not mu, that was another variant) - we're keeping an eye on this

Misc	Any info re Long haul COVID and incidence in double or triple vaxxed individuals	Long-hauler incidence estimated at 1-5%; halved among doubly vaccinated people
Misc	do AB COVID hospital numbers reflect the number of people in hospital DUE to covid or incidentally with covid	It's people in hospital w/ COVID-19, but COVID-19 usually contributes something to one's COVID-19 course
Misc	I understand there is evidence of that Vit D deficiency is associated with poorer outcomes from COVID. Given our northern climate and the appropriateness of Vit D supplementation simply at baseline, as well as the safety of Vit D, why is Vit D supplementation not being promoted?	I'm not aware of compelling evidence - if you have some send it to us and we'll review
Misc	I think that having a primary care task force is vital. My only comment is...WHAT TOOK SO LONG to have this established? (especially when you consider that 94% of COVID cases are handled in the community...aka. FAMILY DOCS!!!)	Well, I'm glad we have it now :) but good point
Misc	Ontario just announced new lockdown measures today. What is the threshold for implementing new restrictions in Alberta?	Depends on numerous factors - not really any different than thresholds before for implementing new restrictions
Misc	is the AMA pt info site live? I am having trouble accessing it.	https://www.albertadoctors.org/COVID-19-info-resources/navigating-covid.pdf
Misc	It seems unmanageable to continue to follow all our community patients as per the pathway if we have massive numbers - are we going to continue to be expected to contact and follow all our patients with COVID?	I think you just try your best, maybe prioritize those who are high-risk or with worse symptoms
Misc	how can we get oxygen sat monitors for community patients at higher risk	AHS is currently looking at possible virtual health programs that may help patients who have covid19 symptoms - some of those may help with some distribution of limited oxygen sat monitors in some areas of the province.
Misc	It was reported today that 811 was so overwhelmed with covid calls, they were punting calls to 911. When is this physician line going to start?	Physician line support to Health Link will likely start after Jan 10th - some calls always go to 911 as appropriate for EMS dispatch

Misc	When will immunization be available to the age 5-18 group?	
Misc	Are there plausible doomsday scenarios not yet discussed in the media?	I think the media is discussed most plausible doomsday scenarios
Misc	When are we going to have access to provincial models in which these medical decisions are being made?	We're building this now
Misc	Thank you to all of you who have put countless hours into this task of helping to inform the province's physicians!!! You guys are amazing.	Thanks Kristine!
Misc	AMA.org/ COVID 2022 link does not open	
Misc	Thank you guys for all your hard work!	thanks for your support!
Misc	Can anyone speculate how long this wave could last?	I (Jia Hu) think it'll burn itself out by February but who knows
Misc	Could we have a copy of the presentation. I'd like to look at Ernst's presentaion so I can find the weblinks he recommended	https://www.albertadoctors.org/services/media-publications/webinars-online-learning/past-ama-webinars-covid-19
Misc	Are there any guidelines / rules for returnig to virtual outpatient care in AHS facilities?	I would ask your AHS medical director this question

Virtual billing codes	I've recently experienced a lack of Alberta Health to cover virtual sessions (psychiatry) where I was in my home office of Edmonton, Alberta - but the patient (who used to live in Alberta summer of 2021 and moved to Nova Scotia) was in Antigonish County, Nova Scotia. Any comments about this? I've had to terminate care with my patient by now - because of this problem. I've called the CMPA of this as well.	CPSA has guidance on virtual care that should be considered. https://cpsa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/AP_COVID-19-Virtual-Care.pdf For specific billing advice please contact billingadvice@albertadoctors.org
Virtual billing codes	Is there a link re virtual care codes, and what we can expect for increased remuneration for the CMGP modifier?	Please wait for the Bulletin and AMA Fee Navigator updates. Updates will be found here: https://www.albertadoctors.org/services/physicians/compensation-billing/billing-help

Virtual billing codes	Do new modifiers apply to specialists?	Please wait for the Bulletin and AMA Fee Navigator updates. Updates will be found here: https://www.albertadoctors.org/services/physicians/compensation-billing/billing-help
Virtual billing codes	When will more specific details about psychiatric virtual billing codes going to be available?	Please wait for the Bulletin and AMA Fee Navigator updates. Updates will be found here: https://www.albertadoctors.org/services/physicians/compensation-billing/billing-help
Virtual billing codes	Are rules re complex modifiers (allowance to consider indirect care) extended to specialists as well ?	Please wait for the Bulletin and AMA Fee Navigator updates. Updates will be found here: https://www.albertadoctors.org/services/physicians/compensation-billing/billing-help
Virtual billing codes	Do new modifiers apply to specialists?	Please wait for the Bulletin and AMA Fee Navigator updates. Updates will be found here: https://www.albertadoctors.org/services/physicians/compensation-billing/billing-help
Virtual billing codes	Any comment on modifiers for specialists (indirect care)?	Please wait for the Bulletin and AMA Fee Navigator updates. Updates will be found here: https://www.albertadoctors.org/services/physicians/compensation-billing/billing-help
Virtual billing codes	Can we bill for COVID screening as this variant will require more vigilance	Please wait for the Bulletin and AMA Fee Navigator updates. Updates will be found here: https://www.albertadoctors.org/services/physicians/compensation-billing/billing-help
Virtual billing codes	With virtual care again being encouraged, are there any options for patients with out of province health care numbers other than them paying privately?	Please wait for the Bulletin and AMA Fee Navigator updates. Updates will be found here: https://www.albertadoctors.org/services/physicians/compensation-billing/billing-help