

Vaccinators Utilized in Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Region During COVID-19 Pandemic 2021/2022

To: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

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Recommendations

It is recommended that the Board of Health:

1. Receive this report for information

Key Points

- The need to expand our capacity to vaccinate within the Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph (WDG) region, required we engage many different types of vaccinators to reach both our urban and our rural populations.
- Utilizing different vaccinators with varied skill sets helped Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (WDGPH) vaccinate hard to reach populations within our community.

- WDGPH utilized the vaccination skills of student nurses (SN), registered practical nurses (RPN), registered nurses (RN), public health nurses (PHN), nurse practitioners (NP), physicians, emergency medical services (EMS), pharmacists, midwives, and trained veterinarians to vaccinate.

Discussion

WDGPH looked for creative ways to utilize all skilled and knowledgeable vaccinators within our community so that as a community we could maintain other services, like primary care and emergency services, while providing the community with timely vaccinations.

The arrival of COVID-19 vaccines in December 2020 created an enormous public demand for vaccine and resulted in, a huge need for multiple vaccinators in the WDG region. WDGPH needed to rapidly expand staffing to accommodate the community's demand for vaccination. To meet this need, WDGPH looked at all members of our community who had either current vaccination skills or individuals with a health background who were able to be rapidly trained to vaccinate safely and professionally.

Public Health Nurses, Registered Nurses, Registered Practical Nurses and Student Nurses

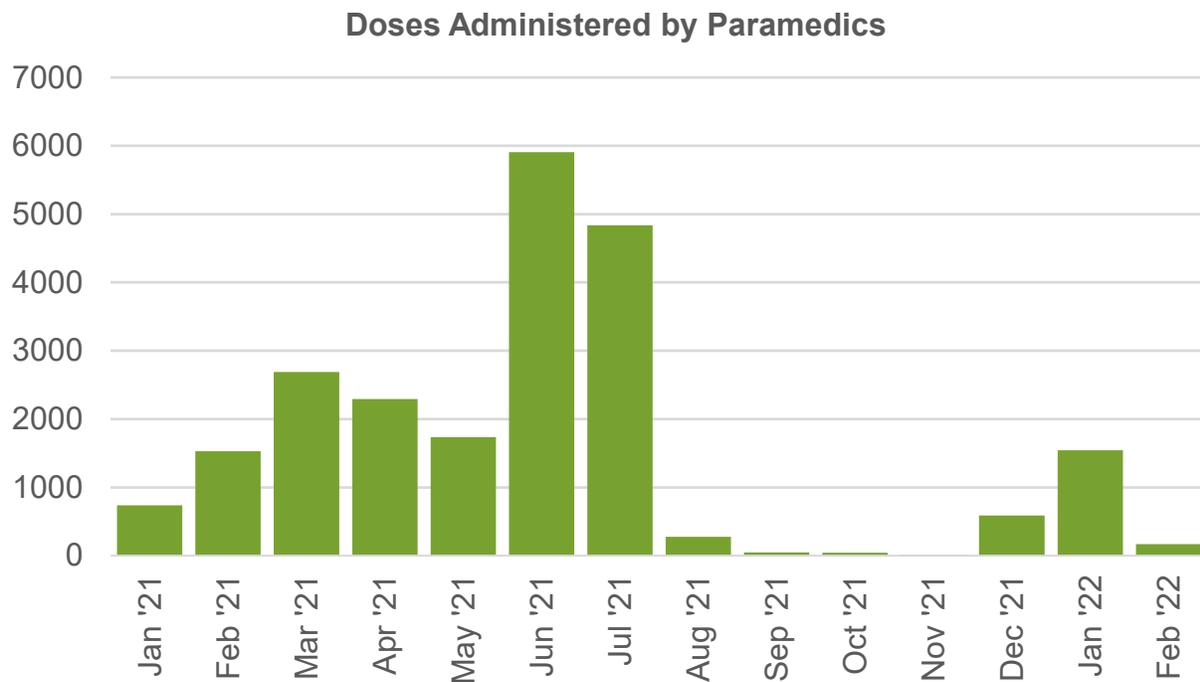
Prior to the development of COVID-19 vaccines, WDGPH began hiring nurses in anticipation of the need for mass vaccination. RN's, RPN's and SN's were hired in late 2020 to assist with our influenza and school vaccination campaigns. These nurses were trained by PHN's to deliver vaccinations according to WDGPH protocols.

In January 2021, when COVID-19 vaccines became available, the Ministry of Health (MOH) requested that all public health units begin vaccinating the highest risk populations, which included all residents of Long-Term Care (LTC), Retirement Homes (RH) and all high-risk health care workers. WDGPH was able to respond quickly to this request by sending highly trained diverse nursing teams to vaccinate these populations in their facilities and at onsite early vaccination clinics.

As the eligibility for COVID-19 vaccination expanded and WDGPH developed mass immunization clinics (MICs), these sites were initially primarily staffed with WDGPH trained nursing teams but as the demand for vaccination continued to increase, the importance of adding other skilled vaccinators to expand daily volumes became an imperative.

Emergency Medical Services

EMS were the first group of individuals outside of nurses that WDGPH trained to vaccinate. Initially, EMS supported the WDG region at the MICs but as the need for vaccination expanded to other priority populations, their role as vaccinators evolved. Since mid 2021 the EMS vaccinators have been immunizing clients in their homes throughout the WDG region. These clients had a variety of underlying conditions that prevented them from being vaccinated at MICs and the EMS vaccination team made it possible for them to be vaccinated.



Physicians and Nurse Practitioners

Throughout the vaccination campaign, WDGPH has partnered with physicians and nurse practitioners, usually through local family health teams (FHTs), to provide vaccination. These skill vaccinators have provided vaccine to the WDG region in MICs, drive thru clinics and in their offices. They have enthusiastically vaccinated since the onset of the program and have provided thousands of vaccinations. A total of 209 physicians and 44 nurse practitioners participated in the vaccination campaign. Below are our top physician and nurse practitioner vaccinators:

Physician	Doses Administered
Dr. Sidney Brodovsky	5689

Dr. Cary Shafir	5686
Dr. Joanne Willoughby	4474

Nurse Practitioner	Doses Administered
Katy Wilton	1673
Rhiannon De La Franier	1494
Seraphine McAlister	1169

Business Partners

The business community in the WDG region played a key role in the vaccination campaign. By March 2022, seventy-two different pharmacies have vaccinated members of the community. Pharmacies were especially key in the less populous, rural communities in the WDG region, where WDGPH-led clinics could not operate continuously. Often these businesses were able to offer COVID-19 vaccinations to their respective communities seven days a week. Most pharmacies offer both booked and walk in appointments, which was appealing to clients. Combined, by March 2022, WDG pharmacies had provided 168,756 doses. The top pharmacies in the region are below:

Pharmacy	Doses Administered
Hartsland Zehr's (Guelph)	7831
Shoppers Drug Mart (Fergus)	5925
Silvercreek Rexall (Guelph)	5712

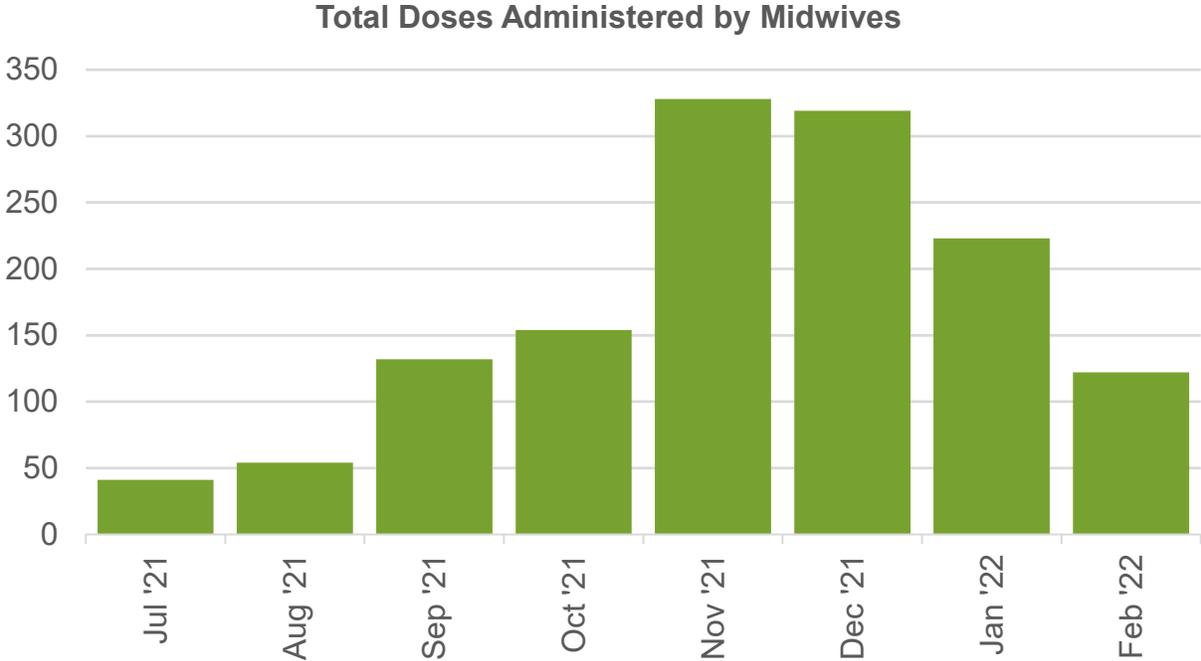
The Linamar Corporation ran MICs at various times during the vaccination campaign. To support our initial program, they ran a clinic from March 2021 to August 2021 and to support our response to the Omicron variant, from December 2021 to February 2022.

Linamar provided the physical space, the equipment, the management team and partnered with a nursing agency to provide 7,587 vaccinations in their most recent clinic which ran from Jan to Feb 2022.

The University of Guelph also provided much needed support during our initial vaccination campaign and during our response to Omicron. They too provided the physical space, equipment, and support staff to help create a highly effective MIC. They partnered with the Guelph FHT to administer 8,651 vaccinations in January 2022.

Midwives

Individuals who are pregnant or were recently pregnant are at increased risk of severe illness with COVID-19. These clients are more likely to be hospitalized, ventilated, or deliver a premature child. Several midwives vaccinated in our community, but one midwife must be mentioned for extraordinary service to our community. Lindsay Sanderson, with the Midwives of Brampton and Halton Hills, would pick up vaccine almost daily from one of the mass vaccination sites and take the vaccine to her client and their family. Because she was a trusted health care provider, she was able to connect with many remote, isolated and at times hesitant clients and was able to vaccinate them and their families. She has provided 1,395 vaccinations.



Veterinarians

When the Omicron variant arrived in the WDG region in late 2021, many of the vaccinators that had supported WDG clinics and community vaccination programs were unable to return to vaccinate for a variety of reasons, including pandemic fatigue and accumulated workload at their home organizations. In December 2021, an update to the Controlled Acts regulations under the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991* (HPA) allowed any person to administer a COVID-19 vaccine, if a physician, registered nurse, nurse practitioner, or pharmacist is present and accessible to the person administering the vaccine. Based on this significant change, Dr. Mercer, Medical Officer of Health for WDGPH reached out to the Dean, J. Wichtel, of the Ontario Veterinarian College at the University of Guelph for support. The response was overwhelmingly positive and over seventy veterinarians/veterinary students responded to the request in the first 24 hours. Of the seventy, ten individuals were chosen to learn COVID-19 vaccination. Although initially nervous, the veterinarians were very motivated to support WDGPH, and they required very minimal training to obtain the skills needed to provide safe vaccination. They were professional with clients and provided excellent care. To date WDGPH is the only health unit in Ontario to access these exceptional professionals and take advantage of all they have to offer. Although this group of immunizers was with us for only a few weeks they administered 1,335 doses of vaccine. Our top veterinarians are listed below:

Veterinarian	Doses Administered
Dr. Brad Hanna	529
Dr. Judy DaCosta	458
Dr. Shane Bateman	191

Conclusion

To meet the demand for vaccination, WDGPH needed to think creatively to engage all the skilled vaccinators within the region. Because of this, WDGPH was able to expand vaccination teams rapidly and this allowed WDGPH to vaccinate the community safely and quickly. Creating mobile teams provided the ability to vaccinate populations who were isolated or who faced barriers to being vaccinated.

Each of these groups contributed in their own way to the success of WDGPH vaccination campaign. The physicians and nurses set aside their usual work and made vaccination a priority, the midwife took advantage of the unique relationships developed with clients to promote vaccination and the veterinarians rose to the challenge of learning a new skill. WDG businesses generously hosted MICs on their premises to support our urgent call to action. The WDG region is very fortunate to have such committed individuals.

Ontario Public Health Standard

Immunization

Goal: To reduce or eliminate the burden of vaccine preventable diseases through immunization.

Infectious and Communicable Diseases Prevention and Control

Goal: To reduce the burden of communicable diseases and other infectious diseases of public health significance.

2020 WDGPH Strategic Direction(s)

Double click checkbox to change from unchecked to checked.

Service Delivery: We will provide our programs and services in a flexible, modern and accessible manner, and will ensure they reflect the immediate needs of our Clients and our role in the broader sector.

System Transformation: We will equip the Agency for change in all aspects of our work so that we are ready for transformational system change when the time comes.

Knowledge Transfer: We will ensure that our decision-making and policy development efforts are informed by meaningful health data at all times.

Health Equity

The COVID-19 pandemic emphasized the differences in health equity across the WDG region. To address this inequality regarding vaccination, WDGPH engaged different

vaccinators that were able to reach clients in a variety of settings. This approach helped address and mitigate concerns regarding vaccine equity.

References

N/A

Appendices

N/A