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**SUBJECT:** Phase Two COVID-19 Vaccine Updates  
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**To:** Primary Care Providers  
**From:** Dr. Nicola Mercer, Medical Officer of Health & CEO

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## **Pre-Registration of Phase Two-Eligible Patient Populations**

On March 5, the Government of Ontario unveiled its plan for Phase Two of the COVID-19 vaccine rollout. Locally we are now registering individuals for Phase Two. Population groups who are eligible to receive the vaccine include older adults (between 60-79 years of age) and individuals with specific health conditions.<sup>1</sup> Additional information about eligibility for Phase Two will be included in the next Vaccine Bulletin.

Please encourage older adults and individuals with specific health conditions to pre-register through the Vaccine Registration Portal ([wdgpublichealth.ca/register](http://wdgpublichealth.ca/register)). Additionally, we are continuing to pre-register older adults (80 years of age and older), Indigenous adults, and other populations who are part of Phase One.

**In accordance with the terms set out by the Ministry of Health, WDGPH is requesting your assistance with pre-registering your patients who are eligible for the vaccine.** Physicians who assist their patients with pre-registering are eligible to bill using the new Patient Facilitation Fee (Q007). Please consider this Advisory as documentation that physician support has formally been requested for assistance in identifying your patients in the above groups and supporting them to pre-register or book appointments for the vaccine. Please refer to Ministry INFOBulletin 210301 for more information.<sup>2</sup>

Further details about when different populations are (a) able to pre-register and (b) eligible to receive the vaccine will be provided through WDGPH's Vaccine Bulletins.<sup>3</sup>

## **AstraZeneca Vaccine Pilot for Primary Care**

Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (WDGPH) has been selected as one of six public health units in the province to pilot the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine (AZD1222) to patients through primary care practices. At this time, the vaccine will only be available to certain offices, however it is anticipated that this will expand as more vaccine becomes available.

Eligible patients must be 60-64 years of age, rostered in your practice, and must not have significant comorbidities. Physicians who immunize their patients are eligible to bill the new Temporary Fee Code (G593) in accordance with terms set by the Ministry of Health. Please refer to Ministry INFOBulletin 210301 for more information.<sup>2</sup>

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Physicians are to use their existing EMR to book their rostered patients for vaccine appointments, however they must input vaccine administration information into the provincial online database, COVax. This database is not difficult to use but does require a short online training video. WDGPH can provide support to register new users from primary care in the provincial system. For more information on how to be trained and registered to use COVax please contact Marlene Jantzi at WDGPH (contact info provided below).

The AstraZeneca vaccine was approved by Health Canada on February 26 for all adults 18 years of age and older.<sup>4</sup> Data from Phase II/III clinical trials found an efficacy of 62.1% among participants who received two standard doses of vaccine.<sup>5</sup> A subsequent exploratory analysis of the clinical trial data found an efficacy of 76.0% after a single standard dose from day 22 to day 90 after immunization.<sup>5</sup> While the AstraZeneca vaccine has a lower efficacy than the available mRNA vaccines, this efficacy is still significant and the vaccine has been shown to reduce serious illness, hospitalization, and death.

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) presently recommends that the AstraZeneca vaccine be offered to healthy adults up to 64 years of age, without contraindications, if:

- The advantages of earlier vaccination outweigh the limitations of vaccinating with a less efficacious vaccine;
- The ease of transport, storage and handling of this vaccine facilitates access to vaccination which may otherwise be challenging; and
- Informed consent is provided which includes discussion about current vaccine options (e.g. efficacy) and the timing of future vaccine options.<sup>6</sup>

Given ongoing transmission of COVID-19 within the WDG region, **WDGPH strongly recommends that it is better to receive the AstraZeneca vaccine earlier than to wait up to several months to receive an mRNA vaccine.** WDGPH has attached a resource to support informed consent conversations with your patients about this vaccine.

**References:**

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2. Ontario Ministry of Health. Ontario Health Insurance Plan INFOBulletin: Temporary COVID-19 Vaccine Fee Code. March 5, 2021. Available from: <http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/ohip/bulletins/redux/bul210301.aspx>

3. Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health. COVID-19 Vaccine Information for Healthcare Providers – WDG COVID-19 Vaccine Bulletins. Last updated: March 9, 2021. Available from: <https://www.wdgpUBLICHEALTH.ca/healthcare-providers/covid-19-information-healthcare-providers/covid-19-vaccine-information>
4. AstraZeneca. Product monograph including patient medication information AstraZeneca covid-19 vaccine. February 26, 2021. Available from: <https://covid-vaccine.canada.ca/info/pdf/astrazeneca-covid-19-vaccine-pm-en.pdf>
5. Voysey et al. Safety and efficacy of the ChAdOx1 nCoV-19 vaccine (AZD1222) against SARS-CoV-2: an interim analysis of four randomised controlled trials in Brazil, South Africa, and the UK. The Lancet. December 8, 2020. Available from: [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)32661-1/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)32661-1/fulltext)
6. Government of Canada. National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI): Recommendations on the use of COVID-19 vaccines. March 1, 2021. Available from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/immunization/national-advisory-committee-on-immunization-naci/recommendations-use-covid-19-vaccines.html>

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