

oneVCH COVID-19 Bulletin

March 31, 2022



COVID-19 research

Research finds clinically and economically effective drug strategy for COVID-19

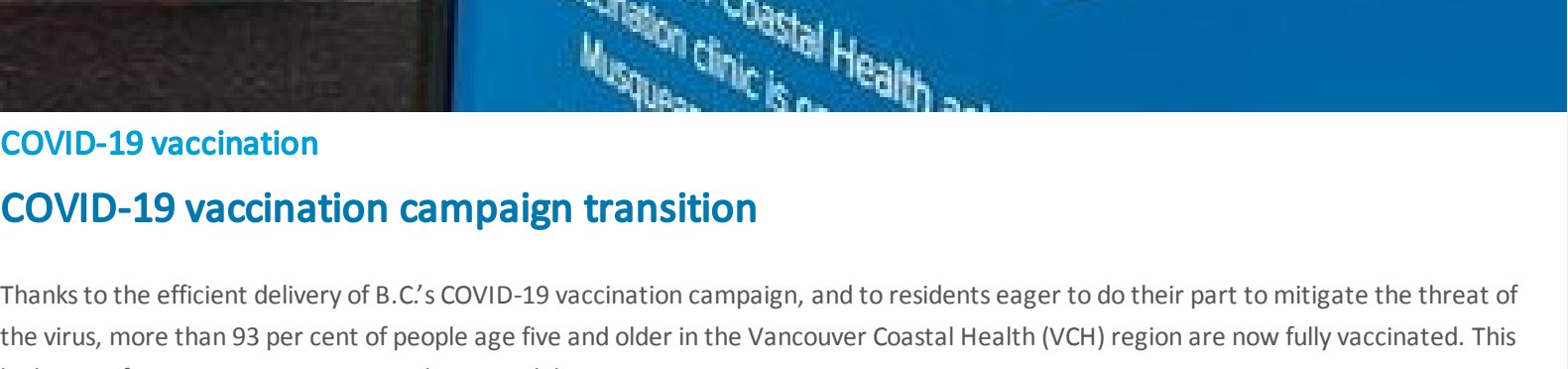
Scarcity of a drug central to the treatment of critically ill COVID-19 patients inspired B.C. researchers to develop a novel dosing strategy that resulted in more people being treated with smaller doses of a life-saving drug.

Tocilizumab, an immunosuppressive drug originally developed to treat severe forms of inflammatory arthritis, became scarce in early 2021 after it was discovered to be an effective treatment for life-threatening cases of COVID-19. When given to COVID-19 patients, the drug inhibits Interleukin (IL)-6, one of the key cytokines in the COVID-19 cytokine storm syndrome that drives respiratory failure and death.

To help alleviate shortages of the crucial drug, Vancouver Coastal Health Research Institute researcher Dr. Luke Chen proposed a unique strategy – providing patients with smaller, fixed doses of the drug, rather than the standard weight-based dose strategy.

Now, a [new study](#) published by Dr. Chen and his team in The Lancet Regional Health – Americas, found that a lower, fixed-dose tocilizumab strategy is both clinically and economically effective.

[Read the full story →](#)



COVID-19 vaccination

COVID-19 vaccination campaign transition

Thanks to the efficient delivery of B.C.'s COVID-19 vaccination campaign, and to residents eager to do their part to mitigate the threat of the virus, more than 93 per cent of people age five and older in the Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) region are now fully vaccinated. This high rate of vaccine coverage is something to celebrate.

With so much of the population immunized, demand has quickly dropped for vaccine appointments at community clinics, and with interest in clinics waning, VCH in the process of scaling back hours or closing many of these sites. We are now in the fortunate position that pharmacies in most VCH communities can handle the current demand. It's an important transition in the campaign, as it gives us the chance to deliver COVID-19 vaccines where people routinely access other vaccines and medications.

Since the start of the immunization campaign in VCH, we have been fortunate to work with an exceptional team of skilled, patient and dedicated immunizers and support staff at our community clinics. As we transition these operations, we want to express our sincere gratitude to everyone who has helped make the immunization campaign a success. We continue to regularly monitor vaccination clinic operations, resources and demand, and to adjust our approach based on community needs. Resources from scaled-down clinic operations will be redirected to other health-care services.

All British Columbians aged five and older are eligible to receive COVID-19 vaccinations free of charge and VCH remains committed to ensuring everyone who wants to get immunized has access to a primary series and a booster shot. Register to get vaccinated at www.getvaccinated.gov.bc.ca. For an up-to-date list of clinics in the VCH region, please visit: <http://www.vch.ca/covid-19/covid-19-vaccine>. COVID-19 vaccination information and resources can also be found on [the BCCDC website](#).

COVID-19 therapies

Updated COVID-19 treatment eligibility

There is now additional guidance on the prescribing of COVID-19 therapies, sotrovimab and Paxlovid, to support prescribers delivering care to eligible patients. Due to an increase in medication supply and operational capacity, as of Mar. 23, all patients at risk for disease progression to hospitalization can now be offered treatment. To be eligible for treatment, patients must first test positive for COVID-19. Provincial testing eligibility at public test sites has been updated accordingly to ensure those who are eligible for treatment are also eligible for testing if they develop COVID-19 symptoms.

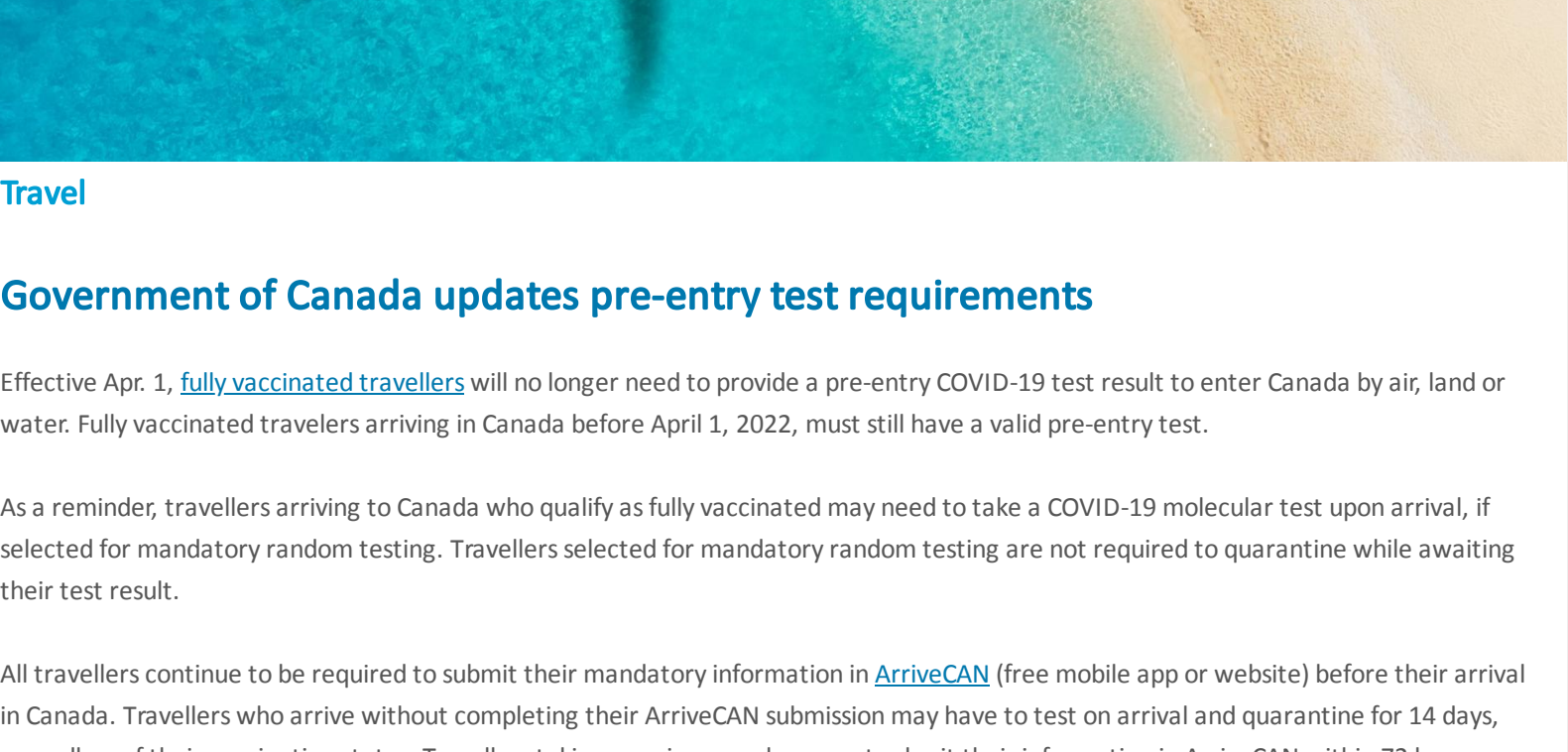
Updated eligible populations for treatment:

- Individuals who are immunocompromised or clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) regardless of vaccine status or previous infection
- Unvaccinated individuals without previous infection who are EITHER:
 - 50 years of age or older OR
 - Have three or more chronic conditions/co-morbidities
- Partially vaccinated individuals (1-2 vaccine doses) or had previous infection alone:
 - 50 years of age and older, with three or more chronic conditions/co-morbidities
 - 70 years of age and older, with one or more chronic condition/co-morbidity
- Fully vaccinated individuals 70 years of age and older, with three or more chronic conditions/co-morbidities
- Indigenous individuals (if not captured above) who are EITHER:
 - Unvaccinated without previous infection
 - 50 years of age and older, with 1-2 vaccine doses or with previous infection alone
 - 70 years of age and older, regardless of vaccine status or previous infection

Other populations

- Pregnancy and Breastfeeding:** Currently available therapies have not been evaluated in pregnancy or in breastfeeding individuals. Prescribers may consult Reproductive Infectious Disease on call at B.C. Women's Hospital if prescribing COVID-19 therapy, especially nirmatrelvir/ritonavir. Patients are encouraged to use protection while taking these medications. In addition, those on oral contraceptives should use a back-up method when taking nirmatrelvir/ritonavir due to drug-drug interactions leading to lower plasma levels of estrogen.
- Pediatrics:** Paxlovid is not currently available for children under 18 years. All cases in which sotrovimab is being considered should be discussed with, and approved by the Pediatric Infectious Diseases physician on call at B.C. Children's Hospital.

To determine an individual's risk for hospitalization, see [Clinical Practice Guide for the Use of Therapeutics in Mild-Moderate COVID-19](#).



Travel

Government of Canada updates pre-entry test requirements

Effective Apr. 1, [fully vaccinated travellers](#) will no longer need to provide a pre-entry COVID-19 test result to enter Canada by air, land or water. Fully vaccinated travelers arriving in Canada before April 1, 2022, must still have a valid pre-entry test.

As a reminder, travellers arriving to Canada who qualify as fully vaccinated may need to take a COVID-19 molecular test upon arrival, if selected for mandatory random testing. Travellers selected for mandatory random testing are not required to quarantine while awaiting their test result.

All travellers continue to be required to submit their mandatory information in [ArriveCAN](#) (free mobile app or website) before their arrival in Canada. Travellers who arrive without completing their ArriveCAN submission may have to test on arrival and quarantine for 14 days, regardless of their vaccination status. Travellers taking a cruise or a plane must submit their information in ArriveCAN within 72 hours before boarding.

Professional development

Course: Physical rehabilitation and return to work for the post-COVID-19 patient

The BC ECHO for Post-COVID-19 Recovery is a free virtual learning community of specialists and community health care providers who use instructive and case-based learning to improve care for patients recovering from symptoms post COVID-19.

Presenters: Dr. Jennifer Yao, Medical Manager, Acquired Brain Injury Program, G.F. Strong Rehab Centre and Amy Sangha, Physiotherapist, Fraser Health.

Date and time: Apr. 12, 12 p.m. - 1 p.m.

Topic: Physical rehabilitation and return to work for the post-COVID-19 patient

[REGISTER HERE](#)

For more details about the BC ECHO for Post-COVID-19 Recovery and future sessions, please visit our [website](#).

Medical staff forum

Virtual Medical Staff Forum on planetary health; COVID-19

Join us for a presentation from Dr. Andrea MacNeill, Regional Medical Director for Planetary Health, Vancouver Coastal Health, on the environmental effects of the health-care industry and how medical staff can help make a positive impact. There will also be a COVID-19 update and live Q&A session.

Panelists: Dr. Chad Kim Sing (host), Dr. Ross Brown, Dr. Patty Daly, Vivian Eliopoulos, Dr. Andrea MacNeill and Dr. Titus Wong

Date and time: Apr. 20, 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.

Topic: Planetary health and COVID-19 updates

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Submit questions in advance using the registration link, or via email to: darren.piper@vch.ca.

See [VCH Medical Staff Intranet](#) for content from previous medical staff forums and check out the [March 2022 VCH Medical Staff Newsletter](#) filled with planetary health-themed articles, events and ways to get involved.

Rural health

Health conference to focus on topics relevant to rural areas

The Rural Coordination Centre of BC is inviting rural doctors and other health-care professionals to the upcoming BC Rural Health Conference. This in-person rural health event will include plenaries and breakout sessions, and hands-on skills workshops including COVID-19-related sessions such as:

- A plenary with Heather Fulton on **Paranoia & Conspiracy During COVID-19: Practical Strategies for Effective Communication**
- Rural abstract presentation by Caitlin Blewett & Sallie Skinner on **Understanding the Experience of Rural Maternity Care Providers During the COVID-19 Response in British Columbia**

Dates: May 13-15

Location: Penticton, B.C.

Topic: Rural health

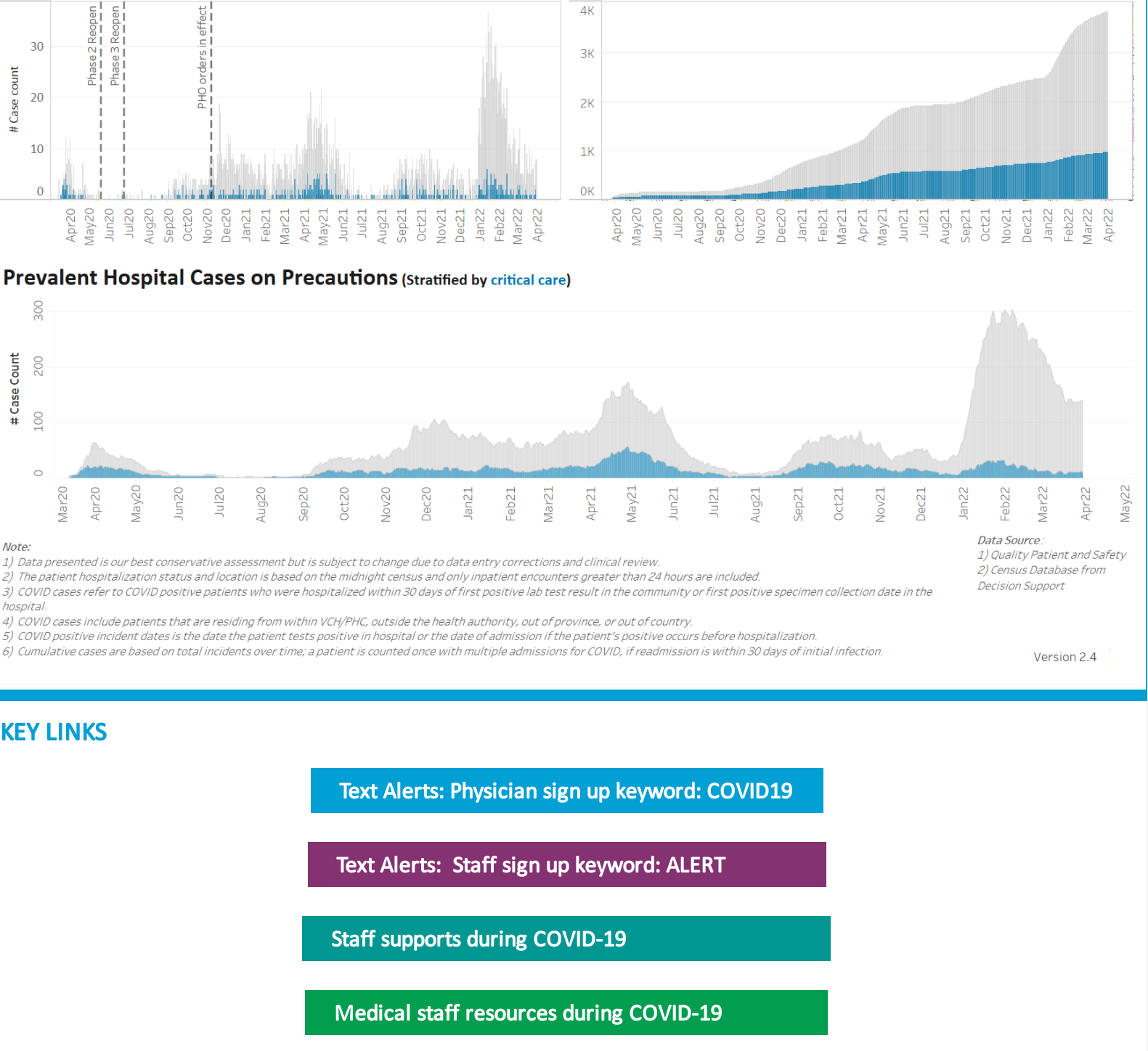
[REGISTRATION AND DETAILS](#)

Unable to attend in person? All the plenary lectures and sessions (excluding two-hour workshops) will be recorded to view after the conference.

COVID-19 DATA

COVID-19 data, including for long-term care, assisted living and independent living sites, is available on the B.C. Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) website, including outbreak and case information.

[BC COVID-19 Dashboard →](#)



KEY LINKS

[Text Alerts: Physician sign up keyword: COVID19](#)

[Text Alerts: Staff sign up keyword: ALERT](#)

[Staff supports during COVID-19](#)

[Medical staff resources during COVID-19](#)

TOOLS AND RESOURCES

- [BC COVID-19 Symptom Self-Assessment Tool](#)
- [Wellness Together Canada: Mental Health and Substance Use Support](#)
- [COVID-19 Multilingual Resources](#)
- [LifeWorks Employee and Family Assistance Program Services](#)
- [VCH Virtual Health website](#)
- [Infection Prevention and Control \(IPAC\) website:](#) Staff resources on how to assess, test and treat patients and protect patients and staff.
- [Infection Prevention and Control Policy:](#) Ministry of Health
- [VCH Regional Pandemic Outbreak Response Plan:](#) VCH Communicable Disease Control website
- [VCH Intranet:](#) COVID-19 updates

REGIONAL EOC ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES

- [COVID-19 VCH-PHC Regional EOC](#)

COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS?

[Please click here to submit questions or comments.](#)

REMINDER ABOUT MEDIA

If you receive a media inquiry, please contact our Public Affairs team immediately for support. Our media line is **604-202-2012** or email media@vch.ca.

The bulletins are distributed on Thursdays. Past bulletins are available on the [COVID-19 section of our VCH staff intranet](#).

Vancouver Coastal Health | **one VCH**

[f](#) [t](#) [i](#) [in](#) [v](#)

Copyright © 2022 Vancouver Coastal Health Authority. All rights reserved.