

BAYCREST BULLETIN

A snapshot of Baycrest news and events - January 2021

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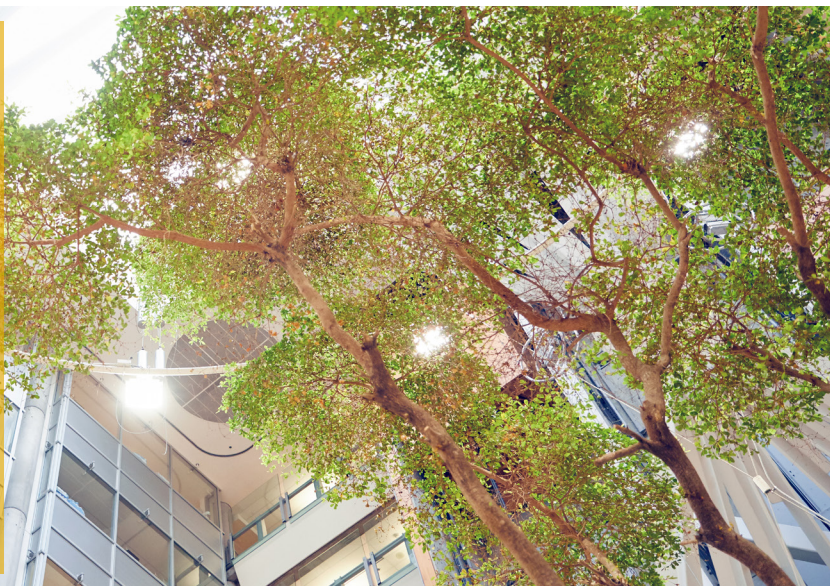
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Busting Myths on the COVID-19 Vaccination

In December 2020, Health Canada authorized two different COVID-19 vaccines. While this represents a momentous turning point in our fight against COVID-19, uncertainty and misinformation around the topic are prevalent. Below, we bust some of the most common myths about COVID-19 vaccination.

Myth: The vaccine was rushed and we can't be sure it's safe.

The vaccine has gone through the same rigorous process as all Health Canada drugs, only faster due to the severity of the pandemic. The vaccine has been tested in rigorous clinical trials and has proven safe and effective. It has been approved by the Government of Canada for use in people 16+ who do not meet certain exclusion criteria.

Myth: The vaccine can give me COVID-19 and make me sick.

The vaccine is not a live virus, and it does not cause the illness that it is designed to prevent.

Myth: The side effects of the vaccine are dangerous.

Serious side effects are extremely rare. Most people (approx. 90%) do not experience any side effects, and about 10% experience mild side effects (e.g. soreness at the site of injection) in the days following the shot. These side effects are expected and are not serious. They are more likely to occur after the second dose. Rarely, allergic reactions can occur. This is true of any vaccine.

Myth: Since the COVID-19 vaccine uses mRNA technology, it can alter my DNA.

The pathway for RNA only works in one direction - you can make RNA from DNA, but you cannot make DNA from RNA. The RNA in this vaccine is a temporary messenger that tells your cells to recognize a "threat" and produce antibodies.

Myth: If I've had COVID-19 before, I'm already immune and don't need to get vaccinated.

Even if you have previously recovered from COVID-19, you are encouraged to get immunized to optimize your immune protection.

Myth: Getting the vaccine won't make a difference as I'll still need to follow all public health measures.

By getting the vaccine, you are helping to protect yourself, your loved ones and your community. Vaccines prevent illness and disease and save lives and livelihoods. Mass vaccination will save people's lives and help Canada recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. As more individuals are immunized, public health measures will likely start to be discontinued.

For detailed information on the vaccine, please visit the Ministry of Health's website at <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/covid-19-vaccines-ontario>. If you have concerns, we encourage you to speak to your doctor.

January is
**ALZHEIMER'S
AWARENESS
MONTH**

Discover what Baycrest is doing in the fight against Alzheimer's and other dementias

www.baycrest.org



Expanding Access to Care for Older Adults in the Community During the COVID-19 Pandemic

As we continue to deal with the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, many older adults in the community are finding it difficult to navigate the current healthcare environment. Some have even found themselves weighing the benefits of receiving a flu shot as opposed to isolating in their homes to reduce exposure to the virus. For others, mobility issues and the lack of safe and reliable transportation have become obstacles for obtaining a flu shot.

of contracting the COVID-19 virus, the urgency of developing different ways of delivering healthcare needs to the most frail seniors in our community magnifies quickly," Susan Chang, Manager of Strategic Projects & Initiatives at VHA Home HealthCare - a partner of the NTOHT - explained. Thus, the NTOHT quickly collaborated to organize a wide-scale pilot that would deliver flu shots to older adults in Senior Housing Units across North Toronto.



In just over two months, Adrian Vecchio, Advanced Practice Nurse at Baycrest, and Tracy Zhang, Pharmacist at Baycrest, joined forces with NTOHT partners to lead and mobilize a collaborative effort to help 700 older adults receive the flu shot at their residence. For Anastasia, the news that she would not have to forfeit her flu shot due to the pandemic filled her with a sense of relief. "Knowing that I don't have to leave my apartment, and having nurses come to us with their gowns, masks and face shields, I was so happy I could get my flu shot and stay safe too," she added.

Anastasia*, a resident of the Senior Housing units located at 4455 Bathurst St. explains how she thought that for the first time in years, she would be forced to go without a flu shot: "I hear on the radio that the government is saying this is the most important year to get it because of the pandemic, but I was too scared to go to my doctor's or the pharmacy in case I got COVID-19 from just going there."



Jagger Smith, Baycrest's Program Director of Ambulatory Transformation explains that this initiative is just one example of how interdisciplinary teams are expanding access to care for older

adults and enabling them to age safely in their setting of choice. "In addition to giving the flu shots, NTOHT members have assigned health professionals to specific Seniors Housing Unit buildings. Through a sustained relationship with seniors in their building, these health professionals encourage and facilitate connection with family doctors. This distributed team of nurses, pharmacists, social workers, occupational therapists and case managers can help address a wide variety of health needs for residents, which helps to reduce strain on healthcare institutions," Smith explained.

Baycrest is a proud partner of the North Toronto Ontario Health Team, and is committed to providing excellence in care both on our campus and in the community. The hard work and dedication from our staff and community partners continues to drive novel, collaborative approaches that help our older adult population stay healthy and safe wherever they choose to live. To learn more about the North Toronto Ontario Health Team, visit <http://northtorontoht.ca/>

*A pseudonym has been used to protect the privacy of our client.

Innovation Updates



Join us on Wednesday, January 13, 2021 for a webinar that explores the various values and beliefs around intimacy and aging. This webinar will also address the sensitivities surrounding intimacy with older adults with dementia. Participants are encouraged to share some of their unique perspectives and a social worker will be present to provide participants with beneficial strategies when addressing this sensitive topic. This webinar is free and open to all. To register, go to bit.ly/IntimacyAndAging or email us at info@baycrestathome.ca.



On Wednesday, January 27, 2021 from noon to 1 p.m., Baycrest@Home will be hosting a webinar that explores the positive impact of virtual support groups during difficult times. Hear from members of a Baycrest-led virtual support group that regularly met throughout the pandemic about how it helped them navigate and cope with the new normal. This webinar is free and open to all. To register, go to bit.ly/BaycrestVirtualSupportGroups or email us at info@baycrestathome.ca.



View a recording of last month's Innovation Rounds webinar on empowering older adults through digital literacy. Older adult technology training advocate Ian Goldman explains the importance and benefits of digital literacy skills. He also shares ways to overcome common obstacles, and provides an overview of programs currently available for older adults to develop digital literacy skills from the comfort of their home. Baycrest staff can access the recording by visiting bit.ly/TEAInnovationRounds1. For non-Baycrest staff, please contact us at innovation@baycrest.org.

COVID-19 Vaccine Pilot Program for Long-Term Care and Retirement Home Staff

Baycrest is pleased to be participating in the COVID-19 vaccine pilot program launched by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, in which long-term care home (Apotex Centre, Jewish Home for the Aged) and retirement home (The Terraces) staff are eligible for immunization.

In line with the Ministry's criteria, a limited number of vaccines were made available for staff in December. We expect to hear more about the expansion of eligibility to more staff, caregivers and residents as more vaccine becomes available. Please note that the Ministry's pilot has focused on the logistics of distributing the vaccine, not the safety or efficacy of the vaccine, both of which have

already been established.

We are fortunate to be part of this program and it will help ensure system improvements to the process of distributing the vaccine moving forward. Since the beginning of the pandemic, Baycrest has been on the leading edge of infection prevention and control (IPAC) measures.

Given the proven, high efficacy and safety of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, taking part in the Ministry's vaccination pilot program is in line with our strategy of implementing the best evidence-based practices and doing everything we can to keep everyone at Baycrest safe.



Baycrest's Executive Medical Director, Dr. Sid Feldman, receiving his COVID-19 vaccination.

Decade of Healthy Aging

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) has declared 2021-2030 to be the *Decade of Healthy Ageing*. This declaration not only seeks to highlight the importance of both physical and mental health as we grow older, but also the important contributions older persons make to society. Healthy aging is about creating the environments and

opportunities that enable people to be and do what they value throughout their lives. Healthy aging includes more than physical health. Mental health, social connectedness and the opportunity to contribute to society are all important factors.

This declaration could not have come

at a more appropriate time. The unprecedented events of the COVID-19 pandemic have emphasized the pervasiveness of ageism and its deadly impact on older persons across the world. This is a critical time to protect the human rights of older persons and have their voices heard for them to enjoy their autonomy and freedom.

Baycrest maintains its rank as a Top 10 research-intensive hospital in Canada

Baycrest is proud to be recognized as Canada's most research-intensive aging-focused hospital and the second most research-intensive small hospital in Research Infosource's 2020 rankings for Canada's Top 40 Research Hospitals.

Baycrest ranked fourth overall for research intensity, with an average of \$610,000 in research spending per scientist, even when considered among much larger institutions across the country. Baycrest has been recognized among Canada's top research hospitals in this category for nine years in a row, this year with a large jump from last year's position in eighth place. Baycrest also ranked among Canada's top five research hospitals by growth, with an 18.4% increase in research spending year over year.

Research at Baycrest's world-renowned Rotman Research Institute (RRI) and across the Baycrest campus focuses on aging, with an emphasis on the prevention, early detection and treatment of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. Other areas of focus in the RRI include

aging and brain health, cognitive neuroscience and neuroinformatics, supported by funding from donors, community partners, companies, non-profits, granting agencies, foundations and the provincial and federal governments. Baycrest's Rotman Research Institute is also the national scientific headquarters for the Canadian Consortium on Neurodegeneration in Aging, the country's largest collaborative research program addressing issues of dementia, including more than 300 leading researchers and clinicians.

"Now, more than ever, the health and well-being of older adults is front and centre here in Canada and around the world," says Dr. Allison Sekuler, Vice-President, Research and the Sandra A. Rotman Chair in Cognitive Neuroscience at Baycrest. "Baycrest's Rotman Research Institute continues to make great strides in the field of aging and brain health, discovering information to address these urgent needs, and to help older adults live their best possible lives throughout the pandemic and beyond."

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit earlier this year, Baycrest researchers quickly pivoted to better understand and address the virus' many impacts

on our lives, in addition to continuing critical research in aging, dementia and brain health. Among many other studies currently ongoing, scientists at Baycrest's Rotman Research Institute are examining the effects of COVID-19 infection on the brain, as well as the impact of the pandemic on mental health and cognitive function in older adults. Baycrest is also partnering on clinical trials aimed at prevention of COVID-19 infection in long-term care residents and front-line care workers, and assessing the impact of a number of interventions aimed at supporting older adults in congregate care as well as in the community.

Research Infosource's annual Top 40 Research Hospital list ranks hospitals on their ability to attract financial support for research.



Baycrest



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with the University of Toronto

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