

Provincial COVID-19 media relations

Please note that a new email address has been created for all COVID-19-related media enquiries:

covid-19media@sharedhealthmb.ca

This email address should be used for all media enquiries related to COVID-19, including questions for Shared Health, Regional Health Authorities and MHSAL. This includes enquiries about health-care system operations, public health, hospitals, personal care homes, home care, etc.

The account is closely staffed and will route all inquiries to the appropriate source.

PRESS CONFERENCES

MHSAL and Shared Health will be holding daily or near-daily press availability with health officials.

Please note these conferences are the primary point of contact for media and the primary source of updates on the COVID-19 pandemic as it relates to Manitoba.

This is the forum for media to ask questions of health officials. The above-mentioned email address will be monitored actively and spokespeople will respond throughout the day to follow-up questions, clarifications, and similar enquiries, but requests to confirm new information should primarily be reserved for press briefings. Information will likely be evolving very quickly and health officials will not be in a position to continually confirm new information throughout the day, as their primary focus will necessarily be on operations.

WRITTEN UPDATES and ONLINE INFORMATION

The primary source of COVID-19 information for media and the general public is:

<http://www.manitoba.ca/health/coronavirus/index.html>

We encourage media to promote that link to the public and to refer to it for information for broadcast and publication. Written media releases are also available on this page. We request that media review the website prior to contacting media relations for information to ensure it is not already readily available online. The website can be considered an official source of information and may be cited.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE FACILITIES

Working media will not be permitted access to any Manitoba health-care facilities during the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes not attending to patient-care areas, nor conducting interviews inside health-care facilities or offices. We apologize for this inconvenience.

Media will be permitted outside of facilities to shoot footage, standups, etc., but we ask media to please stay a minimum of 50 metres from any entrance so as to respect the privacy of patients, staff, and others coming and going from the facility. We understand that media may want to speak with people passing by but we ask you to do so a respectful distance from the entrances and in a way that does not interfere with operations. We appreciate your cooperation with this matter.

IMPORTANT PUBLIC HEALTH INFORMATION

We ask the media's cooperation with disseminating important public health information as we all collectively work to contain the spread of COVID-19 in Manitoba. Some particular information

we would like media to prioritize in this regard includes information listed on the home page and in the “For the public” section of <http://www.manitoba.ca/health/coronavirus/public.html> Many of the answers to questions that are commonly asked by media and the public can be found here.

PUBLIC and PATIENT INQUIRIES

We request that media advise any members of the public or patients who may be experiencing difficulty accessing services or who have questions or concerns about their care experience to contact the patient relations office at the facility where they are/were receiving treatment. A link with all site contact info can be found here: <https://www.wrha.mb.ca/contact/client-relations/>.

INDIVIDUAL PATIENTS

Media are reminded that health officials are considered trustees under Manitoba’s *Personal Health Information Act* and therefore cannot and will not speak publicly with media or any other members of the public about any individual patient’s treatment or health condition, including whether particular individuals or incidents are connected with COVID-19. However, representatives from the patient and client relations offices are permitted to speak openly with patients seeking answers about their own situations and with family members who have been legally permitted access to the health information of another individual.

PRIORITIZING HEALTH OPERATIONS

We ask the media to be understanding that the health-care system is managing a pandemic and the primary focus of everyone who works in the system is necessarily on patient-care operations. This means health-system officials and medical experts will likely be less available for on-camera and non-essential interviews than usual. We will not be in a position to accommodate requests for features during this time, nor for statistical requests beyond what is released at press briefings and through written public bulletins. Media is also asked to only contact the COVID-19 media account after hours (evenings and weekends) with urgent requests. Requests to confirm new numbers of cases outside of the written public bulletin process will not be accommodated through the media line. The written bulletins are to serve as the official source of publicly available information.

FRANÇAIS

Pour les demandes médiatiques en français, contactez Paul Turenne au 204-926-7868 ou pturenne@wrha.mb.ca; SVP copiez votre demande au covid-19media@sharedhealthmb.ca