



IMMUNIZATION SUCCESS: A TEAM SPORT

DR. VIVIEN BROWN MDCM, CCFP, FCFP, NCMP / DR. CHRISTINE PALMAY, MD, CFCP

“The most dangerous phrase in the English language is “we’ve always done it this way.””

– Grace Hopper

THE ONSET OF THE PANDEMIC TURNED MEDICINE ON ITS UNDERBELLY AND EXPOSED SOME DEEPLY ROOTED INEFFICIENCIES, INCLUDING A LACK OF COLLABORATIVE CARE. Our siloed medical system simply cannot meet the demands of our patient population. This fragmentation in care was further highlighted during lockdowns. Accessing medical care, including immunization care, became difficult. Due to a shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) inventory, lack of staffing and social distancing, most primary care offices were functioning at half the capacity. Likewise, patients were afraid to leave their homes and may have not prioritized preventative care, such as immunizations, as essential. For example, National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) estimates that HPV vaccination uptake dropped 60-70% globally. Despite this dire time, it is undeniable that our pharmacist colleagues truly became champions for immunization access, as exemplified by the 2020/21 influenza season and vaccination roll-out. Perhaps it is time for primary care to step back and reconfigure resource use. Opening access to patients may be a key component in ensuring vaccine uptake. Even prior to the pandemic, immunization rates were less than ideal. According to a Public Health Study in 2016, over 97% of adults had not had the full course of their recommended vaccines. We must do better.

When moving towards a more efficient and reasonable system, primary care focus should be rerouted to Resources, Access, Communication and Collaboration as outline below:

- 1. RESOURCES** – Pool resources. In anticipation of our upcoming influenza campaign, let us learn from our past experiences and understand that social distancing and increased hygiene measures will still be in place. Some clinics may lack the space to provide efficient socially distanced care. Other clinics may lack personnel. Collaborating and sharing space/staff, may be the most strategic way to increase patient flow.
- 2. ACCESS** – All HCP’s should embrace immunization being a team effort. While guidelines differ from province to province in terms of pharmacy regulations, pharmacists are trained, knowledgeable and able to provide immunization care in a more accessible manner. A patient may live closer to a pharmacy or may be planning to go to the pharmacy to renew prescriptions. Pharmacies may have longer hours of operation, thus making it easier for patients who work nine to five jobs, or shift workers to get access to being immunized. Furthermore, if required to purchase an immunization such as HPV or Herpes Zoster, it would make sense for the patient to simply receive the immunization while at the pharmacy, as opposed to making another appointment with their primary care physician. With patient well-being as a common goal, primary care must embrace the skills and training of our pharmacy colleagues and be champions for their role in immunization care.
- 3. COMMUNICATION/RECORD KEEPING** – One of the biggest challenges facing a new model of collaborative immunization care is communication and documentation. If patients are receiving vaccinations at various locations, who is the record keeper? Both primary care physicians and pharmacists have an obligation to mutually communicate when a vaccination is administered to a patient. Unfortunately, Canada does not yet have a central database (a goal!). CANImmunize, however, is a step in the right direction. It is a free app, easily downloaded to ones’ mobile device and enables the user to keep track of his/her/their immunizations as well as those of family members. See: <https://www.canimmunize.ca/en/home>
- 4. COLLABORATION AND CO-EDUCATION** – When combining forces between primary care and pharmacy, it is equally essential to be consistent in our patient education. This means relaying the same messages regarding vaccine safety and eligibility. Mixed messaging only confuses patients and likely results in a lack of vaccine uptake. Co-education is also important. Joint medical education provides a basis for common learning and a platform for open dialogue.

There is no doubt that the pandemic continues to pose daily challenges for primary care and will for the foreseeable future. Despite numerous missteps too many, the true tragedy would be if we fail to learn from our previous errors. A bright future of promise, efficiency and care lies ahead if we look back, learn and subsequently rally forward with a new vision of collaboration and care.



IMMUNIZATION SUCCESS: A TEAM SPORT

DR. VIVIEN BROWN MDCM, CCFP, FCFP, NCMP / DR. CHRISTINE PALMAY, MD, CFPCC



Practitioner of the Month

Ajit Johal BSP RPh BCPP CTH -Clinical Director [Immunize.io](https://immunize.io) Health Association

888 W 8th Ave Unit 316, Vancouver, BC V5Z 3Y1

Tel +1 (844) 668-6493

contact@immunize.io

Visit our website at immunize.io –

Taking our best shot at immunizing the world

PHARMACISTS PLAY A KEY ROLE IN PROTECTING THE PUBLIC AGAINST VACCINE PREVENTABLE DISEASES;

as the majority of pharmacists across Canada have an expanded immunization scope of practice. Pharmacists can prevent cancer proactively by recommending and administering HPV vaccines in their community practice settings. Here are some tips from BC Pharmacist, Ajit Johal, who provides HPV vaccinations in his community practice sites.

1. **MAKE IMMUNIZATION A PRIORITY**, keep it top of mind in your clinical practice and involve your pharmacy team.
2. **COMMUNICATE THE “BURDEN OF HPV DISEASE”**, remember that the impact of HPV-related cancer is devastating and vaccination is a means to help prevent this.
3. **FOLLOW UP WITH YOUR PATIENTS SO THAT THEY COMPLETE THEIR VACCINATION SERIES;** pharmacies are constantly reminding and recalling their patients for medications, do the same for vaccinations!

ESTABLISHED IN 2018, [Immunize.io](https://immunize.io) Health Association is a pharmacist lead non-profit organization dedicated to improving community and global immunization rates. With the mission statement “**Taking our best SHOT to IMMUNIZE the WORLD**”, the BC -based organization strives to address all domains of vaccine hesitancy and improve immunization rates across the world.

IMMUNIZE.IO PROVIDES EDUCATIONAL WEBINARS ON HPV VACCINATIONS FOR BC SCHOOL DISTRICT STAFF AND WORKPLACES, addressing the burden of HPV related cancers and the effectiveness of vaccination. Vaccinations are provided through community partner pharmacy locations and through onsite workplace clinics. With the “1 for 1 program,” for each vaccine provided locally, another is donated to the developing world, in order to support global immunization efforts.

Resource
of the month:

[Immunize.io](https://immunize.io) Health
Association

Across
the Globe:

Did you know that pharmacists in Alberta have the greatest scope of practice worldwide?*

Hot off
the press!

Canadian Partnership Against Cancer Webinar on Elimination - [Policy actions to improve HPV immunization rates - Webinar June 8 2021](#)

– YouTube

[The pharmacist’s role in prevention of HPV-related cancers \(sagepub.com\)](#)

Canadian Pharmacist Journal

1. <http://www.publications.gc.ca/site/eng/9.859558/publication.html>

2. <https://www.canimmunize.ca/en/home>

* PharmD for Practising Pharmacists | Pharmacy (ualberta.ca)



IMMUNIZATION SUCCESS: A TEAM SPORT

DR. VIVIEN BROWN MDCM, CCFP, FCFP, NCMP / DR. CHRISTINE PALMAY, MD, CFPC

Webinars

IMMUNIZATIONS ARE A TEAM SPORT: A NEW AND COLLABORATIVE APPROACH FOR IMMUNIZATION CARE

SESSION INFORMATION

- Review the current barriers to immunization uptake
- Discuss the joint role of primary care HCPs and pharmacists in addressing immunization needs
- Discuss practical strategies to increase immunization access and education in the community

PRESENTER: DR. CHRISTINE PALMAY, MD, CFPC

MODERATOR: DR. VIVIEN BROWN, MDCM, CCFP, FCFP, NCMP

July 13th, 2021 at 7:00pm (EST)/
8:00pm (AST)/ 6:00pm (CST)/
5:00pm (MST)/ 4:00pm (PST)

[REGISTER](#)

QR code is a link
to register to event



July 14th, 2021 at 12:30pm (EST)/
1:30pm (AST)/ 11:30am (CST)/
10:30am (MST)/ 9:30am (PST)

[REGISTER](#)



Save the Date!

SPEAKER: Dre Céline Desjardins, MD, FRCSC, MSc Gynécologue. Montréal.

MODERATOR: Julie Doucet Pharmacienne.

Sept 2, 2021 at 12:00pm (EST)/ 1:00pm (AST)/
11:00am (CST)/ 10:00am (MST)/ 9:00am (PST)

TO ACCESS THE PREVIOUS NEWSLETTER, [CLICK HERE.](#)