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|  | <p>RhPAP is now administering the RESIDE program (Rural Education Supplement and Integrated Doctor Experience) for the Alberta Government. Starting February 1, 2022, Alberta family medicine resident physicians seeking rural and remote practice in Alberta are eligible to apply in their final year of residency.</p> <p>RhPAP has developed a Rural Information Panel as a monthly feedback process using online surveys. All Health Advisory Council members are encouraged to join. <a href="#">Sign up here</a> using the password “RURALVIP”. Questions? Email <a href="mailto:ruralvip@rhpap.ca">ruralvip@rhpap.ca</a></p>  |
| <p><b>Physician Recruitment Report</b></p> | <p>Shauna Wallbank, Physician Resource Planner, provided the following physician resource update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>High Prairie</b> – there are currently six family physicians, including two with additional skills, in the community. Two physicians in family medicine are incoming. Recruitment is underway for one additional family medicine physician.</li> <li>• <b>Slave Lake</b> – there are currently nine family physicians, including four with additional skills in the community. They are not currently recruiting to the community at this time.</li> <li>• <b>Wabasca</b> – there is currently one family physician in the community. Three new physicians in family medicine will start soon. Locum pools are being used to support this community.</li> <li>• In 2021, 26 new family medicine physicians were recruited, along with 14 specialists across the North Zone. Since the beginning of 2022, two new family physicians have been recruited, along with one new specialist across the North Zone.</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>Presentation(s)</b></p>              | <p><b>Province-Wide Syphilis Outbreak</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Angela Adomonis, Syphilis Lead, HIV Edmonton</li> <li>• Jennifer Gratix, Manager, STI Centralized Services, AHS</li> <li>• Shannon Schreyer, Associate Manager, Provincial STI Program, AHS</li> </ul> <p>Highlights of the presentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2020, there were over 2,500 cases of infectious syphilis in Alberta (a rate not seen since the 1940s). Preliminary 2021 data reports more than 3,100 cases of infectious syphilis in the province.</li> <li>• Of all geographic areas in Alberta, the Lesser Slave Lake HAC area is within the top 10 per cent of infectious syphilis rates. In 2020, there were 706.6 per 100,000 cases in Wabasca; 284.2 per 100,000 cases in High Prairie; and, 197.3 per 100,000 cases in Slave Lake. For comparison, the infectious syphilis rate in all of Alberta in 2020 was 56.7.</li> <li>• The highest case rates by age were among women ages 20-29 (childbearing age) and men ages 25-34.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 170 infants have been diagnosed with congenital syphilis since the outbreak began in Alberta in 2015. 35 cases resulted in stillbirths. Nearly half (44%) of cases were from the North Zone.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |



#### Resources

- Visit [www.ahs.ca/syphilis](http://www.ahs.ca/syphilis) for more information and resources. There are local services available at the Slave Lake Family Care Clinic, the Golden Opportunity Clinic in Wabasca and the High Prairie Health & Wellness Clinic.
- Visit [www.teachingsexualhealth.ca](http://www.teachingsexualhealth.ca) for resources, lesson plans and a conversation guide for teachers and parents.

#### Questions from Council:

*Q: What outreach is being done for remote, rural and Indigenous communities?*

A: One example is of a partnership with Alberta Corrections to do STBBI (sexually transmitted and blood-borne infection) testing at admission. At the Edmonton Remand Centre, 1/3 of people agreed to testing, and this pilot project has been successful. Finding creative ways to reach the population is a priority to increase access to testing and treatment.

*Q: How is substance use contributing to rising syphilis cases?*

A: Methamphetamine use is specifically contributing, in relation to pre-natal care access and syphilis screening during pregnancy. AHS has gathered new data connecting syphilis cases with methamphetamine use and have submitted it to the Canadian Medical Journal.

*Q: Where can people be tested?*

A: Partner Notification Nurses (PNN) are stationed across the province and can do STBBI testing and treatment. AHS has partnered with First Nation / Inuit health to support this testing and treatment model with Indigenous Services Canada. The test and treat nurses can go anywhere, and can even do home visits. Community partner sites and incentive programming have been part of past Public Health campaigns to increase testing and treatment.

#### EMS Update

- Rob Barone, Associate Executive Director, EMS North Zone

Highlights of the presentation:

- Current EMS pressures are not unique to Alberta. Across the country, EMS and healthcare systems are struggling with demand. EMS calls in Alberta have increased by approximately 30 per cent over the last year. Despite this historic increase in demand, EMS continues to respond to the vast majority of serious 911 calls quickly and appropriately.



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|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AHS EMS has embarked on a comprehensive 10-point plan for addressing the extraordinary increase in EMS calls received in recent months. The plan, which focuses on immediate actions that will help create capacity within the system, will ensure EMS remains available and safe for all Albertans. <a href="#">Read the 10-point plan.</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Questions from Council:</b><br/> <i>Q. What tool is used to help EMS travel to emergency locations?</i><br/> A. EMS uses an advanced integrated mapping tool that uses Google Maps real time traffic data, as well as other mapping data (i.e. town site map) to route around potential blockages. Response routing efficiency is also dependent on address input accuracy from the caller, which can be challenging at times during high-stress situations.</p> |
| <p><b>Voices of the Community</b></p>           | <p>No public from the community were present to provide input.</p>  |
| <p><b>Council Round Table and Good News</b></p> | <p>Council discussed the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic on their communities, especially with frustrations due to varying, convoluted restrictions. Access to rapid tests are a concern, especially within smaller communities. As well, Council shared that while most residents in a Wabasca long-term facility have been sick with Omicron, none had to be transported to hospital. Finally, mental health and addictions are impacting communities; a lack of supports available for child mental health is concerning.</p>  |
| <p><b>Actions</b></p>                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aaryn to circulate the finalized virtual Labour &amp; Delivery Department tour when complete with higher quality photos.</li> <li>LSL HAC has elected to move to a quarterly meeting schedule. Dates for 2022 / 2023 will be ratified and posted publicly.</li> <li>Dalique to share promotional information about the opioid dependency clinic in High Prairie.</li> <li>Dalique to determine how many FTE there are in High Prairie, Wabasca and Slave Lake dedicated to child mental health.</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>NEW BUSINESS</b></p>                      |   |
| <p><b>Date of Next Meeting</b></p>              | <p>Date: Monday, May 2, 2022<br/> Time: 5:00 – 7:30 p.m.<br/> Location: Online – TBD</p>  |

Our meetings are open to the public. Dates and locations are [available here](#).  
[Find your Health Advisory Council here](#). Visit [Together4Health](#) (T4H) to engage with AHS online.