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April 1, 2022

Dear Registrars of Colleges for Health Professionals in British Columbia:

Re: Mask Use and Infection Prevention & Control Guidance for Health Professionals

I am writing to acknowledge the important leadership role the Colleges for Health Professionals (the Colleges) have played in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic in British Columbia (BC). The ongoing guidance and communication provided to your registrants have been critical for maintaining vital services and protecting the safety of health care workers (clinical and non-clinical), patients, clients, staff and families in our province during this robust and enduring global pandemic.

As we move forward, immunization will continue to be a crucial measure for preventing and managing COVID-19. New variants of the SARS CoV-2 virus will likely continue to emerge. We will respond to them through monitoring and surveillance, public health measures, updated testing, treatments as they are developed, additional vaccine doses or formulations, and through other protective interventions that reflect the characteristics of the variants. Targeted testing, point-of-care assessments, outbreak management, public health measures by health authorities and self-management in the community will remain key supplements to immunization as tools for rapidly controlling transmission in specific settings like long-term care.

For health care providers, BC's response to the COVID-19 pandemic will also continue to emphasize the implementation of a comprehensive hierarchy of infection prevention and exposure control measures to mitigate the transmission of SARS-CoV-2, the causative agent of COVID-19. This includes regular cleaning and disinfection, screening for COVID-19 risks, ensuring appropriate ventilation, staying home when sick, practicing diligent hand hygiene, and the appropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE).

Community and sector leaders will be critical in leading the shift for health care as BC's pandemic response transitions from an emergency COVID-19 pandemic response to a sustainable, long-term COVID-19 management strategy¹ focused on immunization, self-monitoring, and specific actions to protect those most at risk of severe infection.

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With a shared mandate to serve and protect all British Columbians, the Colleges ensure that regulated health care providers deliver qualified, safe and ethical care to their patients and clients. In an effort to further support and reaffirm the authority of the regulatory Colleges, I am rescinding my [November 2020 letter](#)² on the scope of the provincial mask use policy.

In addition to following masking requirements established by employers and operators as part of their workplace communicable disease plans, I recommend the continued use of medical masks by practitioners and patients/clients in medical offices, private practices and other settings when there is close, in-person patient/client contact. As well, I recommend a continued focus by health care professionals on diligent hand washing, immunization, respecting personal space, regular cleaning and disinfection, ensuring appropriate ventilation, and staying home when sick.

Registrants know their practice context best and should use that knowledge, along with other resources from sources such as the BC Centre for Disease Control and WorkSafeBC, to implement masking recommendations that support our collective goal to keep British Columbians safe.

In closing, I want to acknowledge the resilience and dedication you have shown to the health and well-being of your members and to those in their care. Thank you again for the vital role you play in supporting the provincial COVID-19 response, and in serving and protecting all British Columbians.

Sincerely,



Bonnie Henry
MD, MPH, FRCPC
Provincial Health Officer

¹ Government of British Columbia. "BC COVID-19 Go-Forward Management Strategy".
https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/covid-19/bc_covid-19_go-forward_management_strategy_web.pdf

² Office of the Provincial Health Officer. Letter to the Registrars of Colleges for Health Professionals in BC. November 11, 2020. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/covid-19/archived-docs/covid-19-pho-letter-masks-nov-11-2020.pdf>