

# Cancer won't wait

Help Prevent HPV and Cervical Cancer Now

## HOW TO PANDEMIC-PROOF YOUR HPV PREVENTION CARE

Authored by Dr. Vivien Brown & Dr. Christine Palmay

### Welcome to our first official newsletter, released during an unprecedented time.

The demands on our healthcare system seem insurmountable and, admittedly, we all have days when recoiling seems like the only option. We understand the frustration, fear, and fatigue. Nonetheless, as frontline workers from all disciplines, we must strategize to survive the months ahead and do so collaboratively. While acknowledging the stress, we need to quickly reframe, dig our heels into the sand, and embrace this seemingly overwhelming challenge as a call to duty. Cancer WON'T wait, and particularly now, months into the pandemic, it has become urgent to address the gap in cervical cancer screening/HPV immunization and the implications for the months ahead.

The onset of the pandemic in March halted most preventative care due to lack of guidance, fear, lack of PPE, and patient hesitation to access any medical facility. While some care, such as immunizations, were always deemed essential, the reality was that without a sense of safety, physicians and patients were concerned about attending non-emergent medical appointments. As we live through the second wave, it has now become clear that dealing with urgent issues while catching up on preventative care is no longer an option.

In May 2020, the *Toronto Star* reported a 48 percent decline in PAP testing from March 2018 to March 2019, as compared to the previous year. We suspect that, months later, the numbers are continuing to decline.

**We understand that every practice is different, but our suggestion is to do your best and embrace the 3 Cs of COVID: Be Creative, Be Collaborative, and Be Caring.**

**Cancer won't wait,  
and neither should we!**

### Here are a few suggestions:

1. When providing consultations to patients (either virtually or in person), ensure that you have done a pre-chart review to assess preventative care. Review screening (cervical, colorectal, prostate) and immunization status. This will enable you to multitask and avoid further delays.
2. Be proactive. Discuss the importance of cervical cancer screening and HPV immunization with your patients, and emphasize that PAP testing and HPV immunization can PREVENT cancer. Cervical cancer simply should not happen. Empower women to embrace screening as a means to avoid a catastrophic cancer diagnosis.
3. When possible, provide virtual resources. Here are some links to resources that might be helpful for your patients:  
<https://www.hpvinfos.ca/>  
<https://fmwc.ca/hpv-prevention-week/>  
<https://www.immunize.ca/resources/104>  
 We have found that a pre-consultation (virtually, by phone, etc.) prior to an office visit enables you to reassure your patients about safety protocols in your office and provides time to discuss the implications of a missed PAP test. During this consult, address other related issues such as HPV immunization, sexual health, and other essential screening options.
4. Pivot your practice to adapt to change. The ramifications of the pandemic will force medicine to reassess old habits. Virtual care and resources will become essential and hopefully enable patients to access credible information. Physician counselling is impactful, and if we take the time to listen, explain, and resource patients, an in-office appointment becomes less intimidating.
5. Stagger in-office appointments. This will allow time for room sanitization and to have equipment ready (PAP trays, swabs labelled, forms filled). Preparation in advance enables efficient/organized care and leaves time for discussion relating to other important issues, such as HPV vaccination, mental health, etc.

### Words of Wisdom

"It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is most adaptable to change."

– Charles Darwin

### Across the Globe

See below for an inspiring initiative led by the WHO to eliminate cervical cancer globally:  
[cervicalcanceraction.org](http://cervicalcanceraction.org)

**We are eager to hear what your office is doing to address cervical cancer screening and to learn from each other's successes and failures.**

Please email the FMWC at [fmwcmain@fmwc.ca](mailto:fmwcmain@fmwc.ca) to share your story. As we approach 2021, let's attack cervical cancer and unanimously agree that while cancer won't wait, we won't either.

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## HOW TO PANDEMIC-PROOF YOUR HPV PREVENTION CARE

### Clinic of the Month



Dr. Laval, OB/GYN,  
Appletree Medical Group, Ottawa

As an OB/GYN, one of my first concerns resulting from COVID-19 was the significant long-term impact this would have on PAP screening and HPV immunization. I felt it was essential to continue to prioritize my PAP clinic, which is part of the Appletree Medical Group.

I use the PAP test as the perfect opportunity to talk about HPV vaccination. I also find it effective to discuss HPV prevention during birth control, UTI or STI discussion. Virtual care has dramatically increased during the pandemic, and we have found effective ways to prompt the HPV discussion using patient surveys.

Sadly, the pandemic has caused a dangerous drop in HPV screening and immunization. We are now actively recalling patients and prioritizing HPV immunizations. It is so important we don't delay PAPs and immunizations as Cancer Won't Wait.



**Appletree**  
Medical Group

### Hot Off the Press

1. HPV vaccination can help reduce the risk of invasive cervical cancer
2. School immunization programs are at risk due to COVID-19. The impact of this varies across the country and within provinces; refer to your local public health unit for guidance. Stay tuned for more information, as we will be covering this topic in a future newsletter.
3. CPAC has released the Canadian Action Plan to eliminate Cervical Cancer – stay tuned for more news on the developments:

[www.partnershipagainstcancer.ca/cancer-strategy/cervical/](http://www.partnershipagainstcancer.ca/cancer-strategy/cervical/)

### Back in Time

The first successful pad appeared in 1921, when the Kimberly-Clark company introduced Kotex (the name derived from the phrase "cotton-like texture"). The first disposable tampon followed in 1933 (Tampex).

### Want to Learn More?

#### Join us for a webinar

**Presenter:** Dr. Christine Palmay, MD, CFPC

**Moderator:** Dr. Vivien Brown, MDCM, CCFP, FCFP, NCMP

**Pandemic Proofing Your PAP and HPV Care:  
An Evolving Approach for a New Era**

#### Objectives:

- Discuss how COVID has impacted PAP care, immunization continuity and possible consequences
- Address the need to be collaborative and creative to ensure HPV vaccination and PAP care are not delayed
- Discuss the discontinuation of school-based programs in several jurisdictions and how primary care will need to address this gap

Dec 1: 7-8pm EST  
**Join here**

**Add to calendar**



Dec 2: 12-1pm EST  
**Join here**

**Add to calendar**

