

# **Covid-19 Update from Venta Care Centre August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021**

Dear Valued Residents and Families,

This week, Nursing Homes across Canada have been in the news regarding COVID-19, as a Federal election has been announced. Many of the issues of COVID-19 that resulted in high infection and death rates of the elderly in long term care homes became center stage during the pandemic, and election platforms. Alberta Health Services guided this provinces protocols to ensure long term care facilities did not have the same consequences as Ontario and Quebec.

As of August 25, 2021 Alberta, has seen increased numbers of COVID-19 cases. The new numbers are in the unvaccinated persons and these people are being infected with the variant.

Those that have been vaccinated are protected to a certain degree against the variant however a vaccinated person can still be infected with COVID-19. As the number of variants become apparent, we still need to be cautious to prevent the spread.

Some good news today. We are fortunate to have received notification from Alberta Health that a third dose of the Moderna vaccine is available for all our residents of Venta Care Centre. We are planning to administer these doses on Thursday and Friday of this week before the long weekend. We require family consent before we can administer. Please complete the attached '**Consent for COVID-19 Immunization**' form and email back to [tfleming@ventacarecentre.com](mailto:tfleming@ventacarecentre.com) by 1600 hrs on Wednesday, September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021.

Venta Care Centre is taking other proactive measures to protect this vulnerable population. To keep our residents, staff, and families/ visitors safe, we are implementing the following immediately:

- **All visitors will be required to show proof of vaccination upon entering the facility. Proof of documentation to be submitted to the Front Desk by Friday, September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021**
- **Visitors who provide proof of dual vaccination status will receive a Vaccine Confirmation card from Venta Care Centre that they carry with them and show the Front Desk when coming to visit.**
- **If you do not provide Venta with proof of vaccination status by the deadline set, you will be limited to window visits and/or Skype/ Phone calls. These visits/ calls can be arranged by contacting the Recreation Department at (780) 377-4412.**
- **Beginning Wednesday, September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021 all staff and visitors will be required to wear a face shield along with face mask in all areas of the facility. Removal of mask or shield will be not tolerated.**
- **If you are unvaccinated, you will be limited to window visits or Skype/ Phone calls only with your loved one.**

Venta Care Centre would like to take the opportunity to share with our residents and families all the proactive measures, interventions, and planning we put in place since January of 2020. Please refer to the

attached Appendix A – “Weekly Update from Venta Care Centre – April 17, 2020” for an overview of what we done to protect our residents, staff, and their families.

Through our various interventions Venta Care Centre was able to remain COVID free until November 16, 2020. On this day we discovered, through weekly swabbing, some asymptomatic residents who tested positive. We were then placed on” OUTBREAK”, status which required more protocols to follow to ensure that the cases did not spread throughout the facility. The good news was, that these residents, if they showed any symptoms, they were mild in nature. These residents were then resolved by day 21. We were deemed COVID free by the end of January 2021 which was a milestone for a very short Outbreak duration.

We were one of the first facilities chosen to provide vaccinations for all residents beginning December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Staff were also eligible for vaccinations beginning in January of 2021, through Alberta Health Services. During these times, Venta Care Centre was subject to numerous inspections by Alberta Health Services, and Alberta Health to ensure compliance with all Medical Orders. Working as a team we were recognized by Alberta Health Services and Alberta Health for outstanding effort and organization to protect our Residents and Staff during the Pandemic.

Spring of 2021 brought new relaxations of Medical Orders from the Alberta Government and the reintroduction of Visitation in Long Term Care. As families are a valuable asset in the mental and emotional health of residents, we welcomed them back to the facility.

Now, as September 2021 begins, the news around Alberta is worrisome as the number of cases is approaching 1000 a day. These are numbers that we witnessed back in May of 2021. As our vulnerable population has many health issues this is a new concern, as many new residents and their families are not vaccinated.

Communal living requires an abundance of caution and participation from all who enter into the Facility. The unknown factor in this Pandemic has been the asymptomatic carrier of COVID-19. This presents a significant risk for our Residents and their families who are vaccinated but more importantly our staff who are vaccinated who could get infected and then unable to come to work to provide care. Venta Care Centre has received concerns from many families and would like to have all visitors in the facility to wear masks continuously and those who are not vaccinated to wear a mask and a shield, as extra protection.

CMOH has indicated that a visitor can remove their mask in the Residents room, however, Venta Care Centre would ask that visitors remain masked at all times during their visit. There is a responsibility to do your part and let all our Health Care Workers continue to provide the best service and care to your loved one.

### **Rapid Testing**

Starting September 6, 2021, all staff are required to have weekly Rapid Testing. Staff who are unvaccinated or partially vaccinated will be required to wear a mask and face shield continuously in all areas of the building and have regular rapid testing performed.

### **Residents- New admissions**

Beginning Tuesday, September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021, we will be offering virtual tours of rooms for all families and residents. All new admissions or readmissions will be required to have Rapid Testing and residents' symptoms monitored every shift.

We want to thank you for your dedication and thank residents and families for their patience.  
"We are all in this together and together we can get through this"

## APPENDIX A

### Weekly Update from Venta Care Centre- April 17, 2020

Dear valued Residents and Families,

Venta Care Centre would like to thank you for your continued support during these uncertain times. We would like to assure all family members that we have **no confirmed COVID-19** cases at this time (letter sent). Venta Care Centre continues to do our due diligence and take all the precautionary measures in accordance to the Federal Government and Alberta Health Services.

This week, nursing homes across Canada have been in the news regarding COVID-19. Venta Care Centre would like to take the opportunity to share with our residents and families our proactive interventions and plan regarding COVID-19:

COVID-19 infections have been spreading rapidly through nursing homes and we have tragically seen sometimes disastrous consequences. Venta Care Centre has thus far kept residents **COVID-19 free** and **staff healthy and working**. Venta Care Centre began COVID-19 interventions on **January 28, 2020**.

#### Key Points

- Early, proactive actions reduce COVID-19 exposure and mitigate impact at Venta Care Centre
- Early involvement and inclusion of all staff, residents, and families is key to reducing exposure to COVID-19
- Venta Care Centre planning for the COVID-19 aftermath and how we all will navigate the new normal

## **Staff**

### *Travel*

On January 29, 2020 (before the WHO, Canada and provinces posted advisories for travellers returning from countries outside China), Venta Care Centre began enforcing a precautionary 14-day self-isolation for staff returning or having contact with anyone who had recently travelled. Our website was utilized to communicate staff self-isolation requirements and a follow-up questionnaire by their doctor. We mandated that all staff have a negative COVID-19 test before returning to work.

On February 17, 2020, managers began screening staff members who returned to work after self-isolation. Beginning February 24, 2020, all staff were encouraged to screen themselves using definitions on the health authority website. On March 27, 2020, we set up designated stations for staff screening. Screeners in personal protective equipment (PPE) screen each staff members each entry/re-entry into the building using a health assessment tool, ensure staff have no known symptoms, wash their hands and have temperatures taken before they start their shift. On March 27, 2020, when all nursing homes were mandated to take temperatures of all staff members, via a non-touch temporal method, our site had adopted non-touch wrist screening temperatures.

### *Education*

On February 24, 2020, we began educating staff on COVID-19 through newsletters and memos. Since March 2, 2020, we have held staff meetings each shift with all employees (care team, housekeeping, dietary, maintenance, occupational therapy, recreation, administration, etc.). We discuss updates on the pandemic between the activities and directives of the health authority and our site. We focus on preventative measures to reduce virus and disease spread, such as hand hygiene and physical distancing. We designated more break areas to ensure physical distancing. All staff were educated on the importance of cleaning high-touch surfaces frequently and encouraged to change their clothing before going home.

### *Support*

Staff and managers discuss impacts of COVID-19 on our lives. We learned that staff needed day care (schools closed), transportation (bus times changed), mental health support and food resources. We created a day care and carpool groups, provided mental health resources, and social worker access. At each meeting we thank staff and honour them as essential care providers.

### *Roles and shortages*

With official announcement of the COVID-19 pandemic on March 11, 2020, we anticipated possible absenteeism as many staff may fear coming to work. Anticipating staffing shortages, on March 13, 2020 we began training and educating staff on expanded roles. By March 25, 2020, new care task sheets were in place in to ensure provision of all essential care. This supports communication among all care team members, which may include non-healthcare professionals in a pandemic. We expanded roles of all staff members. For example, regulated nurses assist with cleaning, recreation staff are trained in lifts and transfers, and administrative staff are trained to feed residents.

For staff in self-isolation, we helped them navigate to be tested for COVID-19 immediately and return to work in less than 14 days. We empowered them by emphasizing their essential care roles. More than 95% of staff signed a confidential pledge to come to work. Rather than mandating who would work with residents with COVID-19, we asked for volunteers and achieved a high staffing complement.

### *Working multiple sites*

In Alberta, approximately 30% of care aides work more than one healthcare job. On March 29, 2020 we strongly encouraged staff to work at just one nursing home. Staff working at a site with COVID-19 or in acute care are not permitted to work at our nursing home. To prevent within-facility transmission, all our staff are assigned to only one care unit. On April 10, 2020 the Health Authority announced that staff must choose one site to work at until further notice. Venta Care Centre has been successful in retaining staff to work at Venta Care Centre.

## **Visitors**

### *Screening*

On February 24, 2020, we began screening all visitors. At this point, health authority policy on visitors stressed collaboration and least-restrictive visiting measures. Screening was difficult, as visitors often denied symptoms and appeared annoyed when questioned. On March 8, 2020, we had visitors deemed “essential” who had just returned from international travel and were asymptomatic. We gave them PPE to wear during their visit.

On March 9, 2020, we limited visiting times and number of visitors per room. On March 12, 2020, we began permitting only essential visitors who were expected to remain in the resident’s room. To comply with health authority policies and to be transparent, we called all family members to explain this decision. We received cooperation and support from families.

Families were educated on PPE: how to put it on before entering our main doors and keeping it on throughout their visit. Many offered to pay for PPE and were concerned about sufficient PPE for staff. However, we did not accept this generous offer from our families.

On April 3, 2020, the health authority mandated that no symptomatic visitors (fever, cough, feeling unwell) are permitted in the site.

### *Communications*

On February 24, 2020, we began emailing a weekly newsletter to families highlighting our interventions and updates on compliance with government and health authority direction. We posted screening information and stop signs throughout the building, and launched a website for information and updates. Families have access to a 24-hour on-call manager.

On March 13, 2020, recreational staff began arranging virtual (Skype) visits for family. Families were also encouraged to visit residents through their windows, maintaining physical distancing. Teleconferences with our doctor’s and nursing management are offered.

**Beginning April 20, 2020, families who wish to arrange a time to speak with their loved one via phone call or Skype can conveniently arrange a day and time online on Venta Care Centre's website.**

### **Supply Chain Management**

On January 28, 2020, we met with our suppliers and began sourcing incontinence products, masks, gowns within Canada. We began to increase our stocks of PPE. We purchased more oxygen concentrators and facemasks, fluid replacement bags, hand sanitizer and tubing, anticipating shortages and price surges.

On February 24, 2020, we began securing and tracking all PPE supplies. We educated staff on essential uses and misuses of PPE. We accounted for all our supplies, from boxes of gloves to housekeeping cleaning solutions. We tracked daily amounts of PPE being used with residents in isolation. We helped staff streamline tasks to avoid overuse of PPE. When health facilities began experiencing theft of supplies, we had already locked all supplies and fastened our hand sanitizer and cleaning supplies to the wall.

On March 28, 2020, we decided to support staff who chose to wear non-medical-grade face masks and on April 6, 2020, the federal medical director announced support of masks. On April 10, 2020, the Health Authority announced that staff are required to wear medical grade face mask throughout their shifts.

### *Medications*

On March 11, 2020, we met with our Pharmacy to review their Pandemic Plan, anticipating increased demand and shortages. We stocked up on common inhalers and medications. With approval by our physicians, we created a plan and trained more health care staff to administer non-essential medications during the pandemic.

### **Residents**

### *New admissions*

On March 24, 2020, we began offering virtual tours of rooms for all families and residents. All new admissions or readmissions were placed on precautionary isolation, with PPE used for 14 days and residents' symptoms monitored every shift.

### *Routines*

On March 24, 2020, we implemented "room service" to enhance physical distancing. Resident's function by routine, and we began distancing strategies early to encourage physical distancing i.e. not entering the Dining Rooms. We notified staff and residents of changes, identifying changes as safety measures. Success came from constant engagement and transparency of all new routines. When we received directives, staff, families and residents received them also.

More than 65% of our residents have a diagnosis of dementia. We educated residents early about viral transmission, hand hygiene and physical distancing through hallway updates and individual discussions. We navigated physical distancing through the idea of a "hotel get-away." Residents accustomed to wandering could be out of their rooms, but many opted to stay in. We encouraged residents to remain in bed and relax in their room. We closed all dining rooms and encouraged residents to dine in their rooms. Care aides in the halls cue and feed residents who require assistance. We have seen increased nutritional intake.

### **Conclusion**

Venta Care Centre has to date avoided COVID-19 among both residents and staff because we recognized that it was not *if* but *when* COVID-19 would come to Alberta. We know how hard it is not to see your loved one and the stress of social distancing and isolation. Venta Care Centre would like to reiterate that we have taken an aggressive **proactive** approach. We will continue aggressive steps to contain and mitigate COVID-19 infection for minimal impact possible on our vulnerable residents and frontline staff. Please be assured that your loved one is being provided all their necessary care. We will continue to

monitor the situation and follow all the required guidelines to ensure the safety and well-being of our residents, families, and staff.