

2019-nCoV Scientific Advisory Group

Terms of Reference

Purpose

The Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) will use evidence and consider resource availability to provide recommendations to support policy and operational decision-making to the AHS Emergency Coordination Center for the 2019-nCoV incident response.

Reporting Relationship

SAG reports to the Operations Section Chief, Emergency Coordination Centre.

Scope

All requests for rapid evidence synthesis will come from the Operations Section Chief, AHS Emergency Coordination Centre (or the Physician Co-leads), from the PPE Task Force (a subcommittee of the Operations Section of ECC) or from Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health. It is expected that questions may also arise from Alberta Zone Emergency Operations Centers – but those should be directed to SAG through the Physician Co-leads, Emergency Coordination Centre. Questions related to any aspect of COVID-19 are within scope, including risk for transmission, personal protective equipment, strategies for isolation, treatment strategies, and management of patients in hospitals.

Membership

SAG Co-chairs – Braden Manns, Lynora Saxinger

Public Health representative – Dr Alex Doroshenko

Infectious Disease / IPC Experts – Dr Nelson Lee; Dr John Conly

Critical care representative – Dr Shelley Duggan

Emergency department representative – Dr Andrew McRae

Pharmacy representative - Jeremy Slobodian

Provincial Laboratory – Dr Nathan Zelyas

Respiratory representative – Dr Brandie Walker

Alberta Health Medical Office of Health representative – Dr Jim Talbot

Other ad hoc members or groups can be added based on the context of the ECC evidence synthesis requests.

Meeting Frequency

One to three times per week, 60-120 mins or on an as-needed basis as per the prioritized ECC evidence synthesis requests. All meetings to occur by zoom / skype / teleconference

Member responsibility

- (a) Co-chairs identify members. Each meeting must have one co-chair present.
- (b) Each member is expected to attend meetings on a regular basis.
- (c) Members are expected to:
 - (i) Support the purpose and deliverables as outlined in the TOR
 - (ii) Represent their subject matter expertise and bring their views and perspective to the meetings
 - (iii) Participate in developing consensus by considering a diversity of opinions, ideas, and concerns and support decisions as a result of this collaborative process of developing recommendations;
 - (iv) Consider evidence, resource constraints, and equity in decision making
- (d) Members must recognize that uncertainty exists, but that recommendations are still required – based on best evidence and resource constraints
- (e) Meeting agendas will be set by co-chairs

Decision making

SAG has no decision-making authority. Instead, SAG seeks to create high-quality evidence syntheses. To aid in decision making, SAG will also provide recommendations where possible based on quality and robustness of the evidence, as well as the resources available within Alberta. SAG will strive to ensure that recommendations are made by consensus where possible. Where recommendations are not unanimous, the anonymous results of voting will be recorded and provided to ECC or Alberta Health to enable their decision making.

Co-chairs do not vote. Given the need for frequent meetings, and the understanding that everyone is busy, quorum is 50%+1 member. Delegates are permitted, but must be briefed by the committee member they represent, and must bring a similar skillset / content expertise.

Resources

SAG will be supported by a secretariat (from AHS Innovation, Evidence, Evaluation and Impact) and rapid review services and knowledge synthesis (AHS Innovation, Evidence, Evaluation and Impact and AHS SCN Scientific Offices). Where additional content expertise is required, SAG will draw upon AHS Strategic Clinical Network members, Operations and Clinicians. Where possible, the group will be guided by existing review resources (eg Oxford University COVID rapid evidence review service <https://www.cebm.net/oxford-covid-19/> , and other similar organizations).

SAG Process

There are three ways in which questions can be sent to SAG. The first is through Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health. The second is through the AHS ECC Operations Section Physician Co-Leads. The third is through the AHS PPE Taskforce. Individuals outside the Chief Medical Office of Health at Alberta Health are asked to send SAG questions to the ECC operations sections physician co-leads. After receiving questions, SAG Co-chairs will:

a) seek clarity on the question and determine which of the following is required:

- a rapid response brief (hours) (1-2 paragraphs with additional appended documents)
- a full rapid review and recommendation (24-96 hours depending on complexity)
- policy / guidance document – in which case the question will generally be delegated to a strategic clinical network where possible,

b) agree on review timelines, and

c) determine if a communication brief (for AHS staff or the public) is required (including determining the timelines for this separate document).

SAG Co-chairs will forward the final recommendation and evidence synthesis to Alberta Health / ECC.

Date

April 2, 2020