

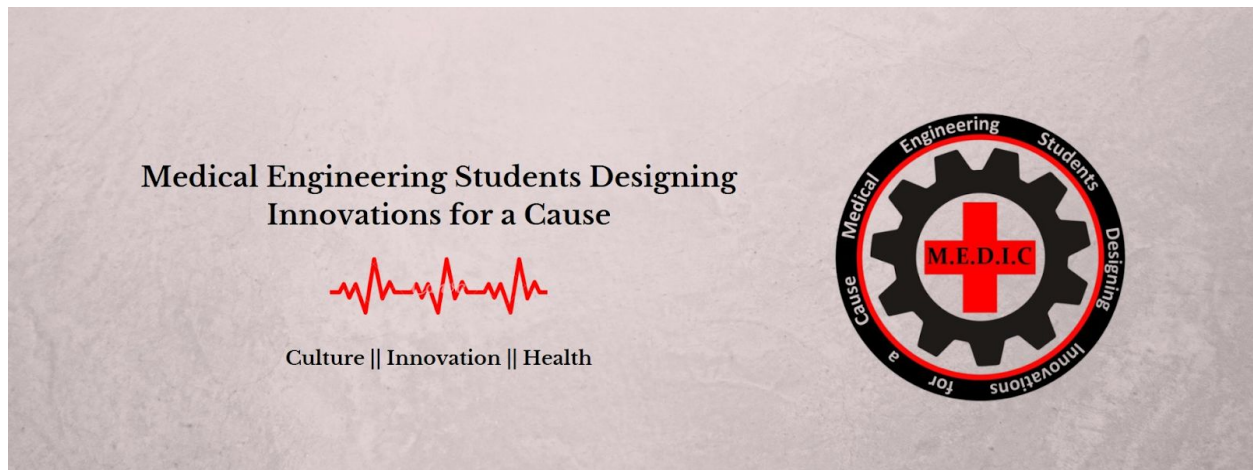


Medical Engineering Students Designing Innovations for a Cause

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November Issue

Mental health and the COVID-19 Pandemic.



by [Hunter Lang](#) on November 28, 2020

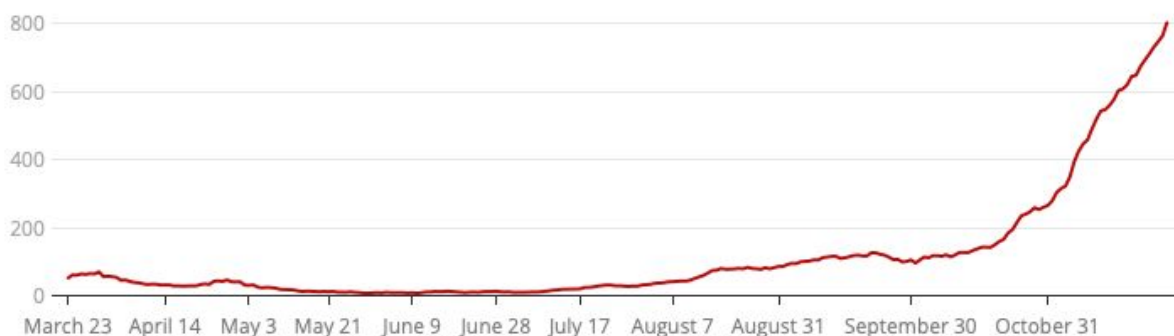
Welcome to the second issue of our MEDIC newsletter! This month's issue will primarily be centered around the COVID-19 pandemic and the effects it has on people's mental health. In this newsletter we summarize and highlight information from interesting CBC articles. As I'm sure many of you are aware, positive COVID-19 tested cases have been increasing rapidly every day for the past week around the lower mainland, mostly throughout the Tri-Cities and Surrey (Fraser Health region). Thus, Dr. Bonnie Henry has tightened up the COVID-19 restrictions that discourage non-essential travel, make mask-wearing mandatory in public indoor spaces, and limit people's social bubbles to their household. The updated BC COVID-19 health guidelines are available online (at

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/covid-19-provincial-support/restrictions>). Please remember to take care of yourselves, stay home when you can, wash your hands, and respect your local health guidelines!

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THIS MONTH'S
TOP STORIES

Combatting the 2nd wave of COVID-19 will be harder than the 1st.



CBC NEWS

Chart: Justin McElroy • Source: BC Centre for Disease Control

Average of confirmed COVID-19 cases in BC from March 23 to November 27.

Summary by [Ashley Kim](#) on November 26, 2020

On October 30th, when B.C. recorded 272 new cases of COVID-19 on that day alone, B.C. Health Minister Adrian Dix stated, “It’s not ending, and it’s not going to end soon, and that creates its own anxiety”.

With the continuous surge of new cases, people have started to develop what is considered as “COVID fatigue”, a constant and tiresome feeling of being overwhelmed with new information and restrictions regarding the pandemic for months. This new way of life under COVID-19 restrictions and sometimes province-wide lockdown have been causing additional stress for many since the month of March.

Mass frustration has been building up largely due to many people being unable to execute significant parts of their daily tasks that were previously unaffected and simple to do. Although, trust is emphasized as an essential part of B.C.'s public health strategy, along with patience. Dix asks everyone to "be respectful of people and not to criticize people," to get through this pandemic together.

Our advice to reduce the spread of COVID-19:

- Stay home if possible,
- Always wear a mask when going out in public, and
- Make sure to properly wash your hands frequently.

The RCMP have responded to more than 88 000 mental health calls this year.

Summary by [Hunter Lang](#) on November 28, 2020

The RCMP have responded to over 88 000 mental health calls and occurrences during 2020. First responders, RCMP, and police officers play a crucial role when interacting with someone with a mental illness or a person in crisis. The independent watchdog of the RCMP has expressed concern with regards to an "unreasonable use of force" by officers when responding to mental health crisis and wellness calls. RCMP Commissioner Brenda Lucki is calling for a reallocation of police funding to help improve social services related to mental health and wellness.

Perhaps COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted people's mental health during these times of social distancing and self-isolation. If you or someone you know is struggling with mental health or illness, know that you are not alone and that there are free counselling resources and services available to you both online and by phone during this time. If you or someone you know needs support, please seek help either through UBC's AMS Peer Support if you're a UBC student (at <https://linktr.ee/AMSPeerSupport>) or through one of the sources recommended by the Canadian Mental Health Association (at

<https://cmha.bc.ca/mental-health/find-help/>) if you are not a UBC student but are living in Canada.



Opioid deaths skyrocket and mental health suffers due to pandemic restrictions.

Summary by [Kisa Naqvi](#) on November 28, 2020

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) last month warned that effects of the current pandemic extend well beyond the virus itself. As we have been socially distancing and dealing with shutdowns, many people have turned to drugs, alcohol or screen time to cope with the daily stress of the pandemic.

Canada is still in the grips of an opioid crisis, and PHAC has stated that with border and travel restriction the local opioid supply has become more toxic. The number of deaths have increased significantly since the start of this year. In B.C there were more than 100 “illicit drug toxicity” deaths per month from March to August 2020. The highest monthly opioid death toll, in June 2020, was 181, up from 76 in June 2019.

Frontline workers have said that due to social restrictions more people are using opioids while alone. This decreases the chance of intervention if overdose occurs and contributes to an increase in overdose-related fatalities.

More recently, Vancouver mayor Kennedy Stewart is seeking federal approval to decriminalize possession of illicit drugs. If approved, Vancouver will become the first jurisdiction in Canada to decriminalize simple possession.

Stewart has said, "it is time to end the stigma around substance use, help connect more of our neighbours to health care, and save lives."

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Thank you for subscribing to our newsletter and supporting our initiative! Have a great weekend and don't forget to tune into next month's issue!

[CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE](#)

References

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Located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the hən̓d̓əm̓iṇ̓əm̓-speaking xʷməθ kʷəy̓əm people, now known as Vancouver, BC.

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