

Care home outbreaks signal community spread

Weekly reporting identifies 14 more COVID-19 deaths

KATIE MAY

ANOTHER wave of outbreaks in long-term care homes is pointing to widespread community transmission, even as recent provincial data indicates a decline in COVID-19 hospitalizations and deaths.

Manitoba continues to report weekly figures on outbreaks in hospitals and long-term care homes but no longer publicly tracks the number of care home residents who die of COVID-19. A total of 14 Manitobans died of COVID-19 last week, an increase of one death over the week prior.

There were 16 outbreaks in long-term care centres and hospitals April 24-30, the province announced Thursday.

If the province is going to release outbreak numbers, it should do so for all locations, not just long-term care, so the public gets an accurate picture of COVID-19 spread, said Jan Legeros, executive director of the Long Term & Continuing Care Association of Manitoba.

“Knowing what the community transmission is looking like is always very helpful for any type of health-care facility or congregate setting... I think that if they went back to publishing some of that data, it would be helpful,” Legeros said Thursday, adding long-term care facilities expected more residents to contract the novel coronavirus after public health pandemic restrictions were lifted in March.

“It’s just the sheer numbers of people that are contracting COVID right now that are making it next to impossible to keep it out of long-term care.”

Even visiting families who’ve been extremely careful throughout the pandemic are now dealing with COVID-19 infections among elderly loved ones, despite policies that still require masks and protective equipment inside personal care homes, she said.

However, visitors are not required to be fully vaccinated, unless certain homes implement their own requirements.

At Holy Family Home in Winnipeg, only fully vaccinated designated caregivers are currently allowed to visit. On Tuesday, the long-term care facility announced 100 COVID-19 cases among residents and 38 cases among staff.

“For two years, she was fine, and then within the last week-and-a-half, she’s tested positive for COVID,” said the daughter of one Holy Family resident, who asked not to be named to protect her mother’s privacy.

Once visitation restrictions were lifted, cases “ballooned” in the facility, and a lack of staff is affecting her mother’s care, the woman said.

“The staff that is working, they go (above and) beyond what they should be doing in some cases... (but) because there’s such a short staff, there’s many a day that she just spends in bed. She refuses to get up because she doesn’t want to bother them. To me, that’s not quality of life.”

Manitoba should have introduced a clear plan for long-term care residents when the government prepared to lift public health restrictions, the woman said. The family has remained fairly isolated out of a desire to protect their mother, even after masking and vaccine requirements were lifted provincially.

“I’ve had no life either, like getting together with friends, I’ll say, ‘No, it’s because of mom.’ And it’s been hard on us as well,” she said.

“There’s no foresight, there’s no planning. OK, if you’re going to lift the restrictions — what is the plan, what are you going to do?”

Older Manitobans are most likely to be hospitalized or die from the disease caused by the novel coronavirus. Roughly 85 per cent of Manitoba’s 1,819 COVID-19 deaths are among those age 70 and up; fourth vaccine doses have just begun to be rolled out to that age group in recent weeks.

Manitoba logged 185 people hospitalized with COVID-19 last week, 12 of them in intensive care. The number of ICU admissions remained the same compared with the previous week, while the total number of COVID-19 hospitalizations dropped for the first time in a month.

During the week of April 17-23, there were 200 people hospitalized and 13 deaths.

katie.may@freepress.mb.ca



Holy Family Home in Winnipeg, which requires designated caregivers to be fully vaccinated, announced 100 COVID-19 cases among residents and 38 cases among staff on Tuesday.

MIKE DEAL / WINNIPEG FREE PRESS FILES



Jan Legeros

[Copyright \(c\)2022 Winnipeg Free Press, Edition 5/6/2022](#)
[Powered by TECNAVIA](#)
