

**Submission Id:** 5174

**Title**

*Facilitators and Challenges Emerging from Primary Care Teams' Engagement in COVID-19 Vaccination Distribution in Ontario, Can*

**Priority 1 (Research Category)**

Healthcare Services, Delivery, and Financing

**Presenters**

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**Abstract**

Context: Primary care has historically established itself as an important part of vaccinations efforts due to its successful delivery of flu and childhood immunisation programmes centred on counselling and strong infrastructure. An effective and efficient distribution of a vaccine was essential for the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Although primary care teams contributed to all phases of the COVID-19 vaccination distribution, involvement of primary care teams in Ontario, Canada has been inconsistent. Criticisms have emerged regarding the limited utilization of the expertise primary care in informing and guiding implementation of vaccinations. An increased understanding of the role primary care teams had in the distribution of the COVID-19 vaccines in Ontario will help determine the unique experiences of interprofessional primary care providers.

Objective: To identify facilitators and challenges of integrating COVID-19 vaccination in interprofessional primary health care teams across Ontario.

Study Design: Descriptive, qualitative focus groups conducted with interprofessional primary care providers and staff in Ontario.

Results: We conducted 8 focus groups with 39 participants representing geographic diversity across Ontario. Participants reflected a range of clinical, administrative, and leadership roles. Three themes were identified as facilitators: i) primary care knows patients; ii) team capacity for vaccination, iii) intersectoral collaborations, and three themes identified challenges including: i) operational challenges, ii) impact on routine patient care, and iii) primary care being overlooked. Participants noted the importance of supporting provider well-being during a busy period of managing competing health needs

of patients. In addition, many primary care teams either strengthened existing partnerships or collaborated with new stakeholders which was seen as important to maintain after the COVID-19 vaccinations.

Conclusions: Primary care teams played a crucial role in supporting COVID-19 vaccinations in Ontario. Future vaccination efforts will benefit from the inclusion and involvement of primary care from the beginning to guide decision-making, along with additional resourcing.