



5 Minutes for Business

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Monoclonal Antibodies: A New Tool in the Toolbox in the Fight Against COVID-19

When it comes to the fight against COVID-19, vaccines are no doubt critical to ending the pandemic but early treatment to support at-risk patients who test positive for COVID-19 are vital to reducing severe illness, hospitalization, and deaths. Enter monoclonal antibodies, an innovative class of medicines that are showing promise in being highly effective for the early treatment of people who are diagnosed with COVID-19, reducing hospital admissions, blunting the deadly effects of the virus and allowing people the world over to return to health sooner.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been long, hard, and devastating to individual Canadians as well as the country's health systems and its economy. When COVID-19 caught the world by surprise, the innovative biopharmaceutical sector immediately stepped up, developed, and delivered a number of transformative innovations.

First, rapid diagnostic tests quickly and confidently identified Canadians carrying the virus, which in turn accelerated their treatment and recovery. Second, multiple vaccines that have seen 81% of eligible Canadians become fully vaccinated against the virus, putting Canada in the top 10 of nations with the most vaccinated people, ahead of the US, Israel, and most European countries. Driven by intensive and ongoing collaboration between industry, policymakers, and public health leaders, this

success is impressive and admirable – but it is also still not enough to help Canadian healthcare systems embed the resilience they need to “build back better”.

Well into the second year of the pandemic, Canada is confronting several concerning trends that speak to the ongoing threat of COVID-19 including:

- The Delta variant has proven to be easier spread and harder to prevent than previous variants – including some cases where fully vaccinated Canadians have still been infected.
- Still too many Canadian adults who are eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine remain unimmunized or under-immunized, allowing for continued community spread of the virus.

Taken together, the ongoing presence of COVID-19 is having a huge impact on Canadian health care systems – especially the hospitals and clinics working so hard to address and reduce the staggering backlog of surgeries and other treatments that has arisen over the past 18 months. And this has a huge impact on businesses as they risk facing another round of lock-down.

Fortunately, monoclonal antibodies aimed at treating COVID-19 itself are now available for Canadian physicians and their patients.

Monoclonal antibodies for COVID-19 are treatments that directly fight infection without waiting for the immune system to respond to the virus. They are designed to prevent infection by



attaching to the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein to neutralize the virus – in other words, blocking the virus from entering the human cell. Ultimately, they can reduce the risk of hospitalization and death, when initiated in the early stage of disease.

With the emergence of variants of concern across the country, in particular the Delta variant, new therapies are important to treating the disease in its early stages. With monoclonal antibodies now available for immediate access by Canadian health systems, a pivotal third leg has been added to the fight against COVID-19. Combining timely access to therapeutics with diagnostics and vaccines gives our country its best hope of finally putting the worst days of a once-in-a-century pandemic behind us.

Information provided in part by GSK. To learn more about GSK's work and how monoclonal antibodies can help fight against COVID-19, watch GSK Canada's CEO & General Manager, Pharmaceuticals, Faris El Refaie in The [Business of Business](#).