

COVID-19 updates for week of July 4

By **Mike Riley** Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

In Canada, as of June 24, the weekly change in cases was 15,047, while the weekly change in deaths was 137. As of June 23, the seven-day average of people hospitalized with COVID-19 was 3,270, while the number of people in the ICU over that same period was 205.

In Ontario, on June 23, there were 655 cases of COVID-19. The number of COVID-19 cases in hospital on June 22 was 516, while the number of cases in the ICU was 96. There were 13,367 deaths reported this week as of June 18 since the beginning of the pandemic, an increase of 16 cases since last week.

In Hastings Prince Edward, as of June 21, there were 39 new high-risk cases and active high-risk cases amounted to 28 people. There were two outbreaks in high-risk settings like LTC homes, and there were 63 deaths reported. There are three people who are currently hospitalized at Quinte Health Care hospitals and nobody in the ICU.

Almost 20 million lives saved by COVID-19 vaccines during their first year

During the first year of the COVID-19 vaccines, a new study by Imperial College London, suggests that nearly 20 million lives were saved. However, the study, published on June 23 in the journal *Lancet Infectious Diseases*, concedes that even more deaths could have been prevented if international targets for the shots had been achieved.

Beginning Dec. 8, 2020 and over the next year, more than 4.3 billion people queued up for the vaccine, and nearly 20 million were saved even though the vaccination campaign was plagued by persistent inequities to getting more shots into the arms of those that needed them.

Data was used from 185 countries to estimate that vaccines prevented 4.2 million deaths in India, 1.9 million deaths in the U.S., one million deaths in Brazil, 631,000 deaths in France and 507,000 deaths in the U.K.

However, an additional 600,000 deaths would have been prevented if the World Health Organization's target of 40 per cent vaccination coverage by the end of 2021 had been met. China was also excluded from the study due to uncertainty on the virus' effect on deaths there and its enormous population.

Other studies have arrived at different numbers of deaths, but they have all been in the 14 million to 19 million fatality range. In the London study, the researchers did not include how COVID-19 might have mutated differently without vaccines and they did not take into account how mask wearing and lockdowns might have been different in the absence of vaccines.

Canadian study finds pet owners can transfer COVID-19 to their pets

According to a Canadian study published in the journal *Emerging Infectious Diseases* in June, found pet owners can pass COVID-19 on to their furry friends when they cuddle them. The study involved 69 cats and 49 dogs, including those in shelters and neuter clinics and owners were asked to fill out an online survey about the nature of their interaction with their pets. Instances of pets having higher rates of COVID-19 infection who lived with their owners were noted versus dogs and cats in shelters, and that cats showed higher rates of infection than dogs.

The study's scientists suggest precluding this transmission of the virus by keeping their distance from their pet, wearing a mask and taking other measures, as they would if they were trying not to infect another person.