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25 Sask. health groups unite in online pandemic ad campaign targeted at young adults

About two dozen Saskatchewan health-care organizations have joined forces in an online ad campaign that targets young adults and asks them to “hang in there” by following public health guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

The campaign's URL – WeAreSickOfThisToo.ca – expresses the campaign's theme that young adults – along with all Saskatchewan people - want a return to normal, but restrictions continue to be necessary as COVID case numbers rise. A total of 25 health organizations have combined to support the campaign in a broadly based show of unity that spans the health system.

“As health-care providers we are very concerned about the increasing number of COVID-19 cases in our province,” said Dr. Myles Deutscher, president of the Saskatchewan College of Family Physicians. “We wanted to target our younger patients because of the increase in cases we have seen in this demographic. Increased COVID cases puts a burden on all areas of the health-care system, which translates into a higher burden of illness for both COVID and non-COVID illnesses.”

“We know that for young adults especially, these last nine months have been very difficult,” added Shayan Shirazi, president of the Student Medical Society of Saskatchewan. “We have never lived through a pandemic in our adult lives before and losing our regular activities and social lives has been challenging. As young adults, we primarily use social media to communicate, so it is nice to have a reminder of what we need to be doing to keep everyone safe on channels that we actually use.”

The six-week online campaign includes website and social media advertising designed by MGM Communications. The campaign is designed to be empathetic as people grow fatigued by restrictions, yet call for compliance. The groups contributing to the campaign are listed below.

Quotes:

Dr. Barb Konstantynowicz
President, Saskatchewan Medical Association

“Saskatchewan's physicians have heard sobering predictions for the health-care system if we do not get COVID-19 under control. We are seeing more cases among all age groups, and this campaign encourages young adults to recognize public health guidelines include them as well. The only way we will return to normal is by reducing the spread of this virus.”

“The online campaign takes on a serious issue with an approach that sympathizes with what we are all experiencing and feeling. I urge you to check out WeAreSickOfThisToo.ca, and share the messages you see in social media. We will get through this together.”

Contact: Girard Hengen, SMA Communications
306-230-2673; girard.hengen@sma.sk.ca

Tracy Zambory
President, Saskatchewan Union of Nurses

"It's a powerful statement when such a large and respected group of provincial health organizations unite with the single goal of educating the public on how they can work together to slow the spread of COVID-19."

"We are imploring individuals to follow public health directives and the advice from their trusted health professionals – a simple, yet vital message in our collective fight to overcome this pandemic, especially as cases continue to rise heading into the holiday season."

Contact: Lars Murran, SUN Public Relations
306-596-9189; Lars.Murran@sun-nurses.sk.ca

Dr. Myles Deutscher
President, Saskatchewan College of Family Physicians

"After nine months of physical distancing and increased anxiety, we are all feeling pretty burned out. With increased community restrictions, especially over the Christmas season, we predict it may be more challenging for community members to abide by these rules. We wanted to find a way for our organizations to come together to encourage the public to continue to follow the public health orders in order to keep our families, our communities and ourselves safe."

"We also want to thank the public for staying home if you have been in contact with a case of COVID, getting tested if you have symptoms, washing your hands, wearing a mask, and by complying with the restrictions set out by public health."

Contact: Shona den Brok, SCFP
306-227-2042; SdenBrok@sk-cfp.ca

George Furneaux
Chair, Pharmacy Association of Saskatchewan

"We are all struggling during this pandemic, particularly now during the holiday season. But we need to stay strong to stay healthy, and to protect everyone around us. Pharmacists, like all other health-care providers, are very concerned about their patients, their health, and the health system."

"We hope this message resonates with our younger population and hopefully we can all get back to our crucial family and friend connections soon."

Contact: Michelle James, PAS
306-359-7277; Michelle.james@skpharmacists.ca

Shayan Shirazi,
President, Student Medical Society of Saskatchewan

“Like many other students, youth, and citizens of this province, medical students really wish things were normal again. Because everyone is understandably tired of restrictions and uncertainty, it is natural to want to forget about some of the rules that protect us all. The campaign is needed because everyone could use a reminder that we are all in this together as we approach the end of the pandemic.”

“This holiday season will be particularly difficult as we cannot gather in groups that we are normally used to, but we must all work together to protect those we love and our community, especially at a time where cases are so high, and the health-care system is really overburdened.”

*Contact: Shayan Shirazi, SMSS
306-737-9283; shs709@usask.ca*

Health-care agencies involved in the campaign:

Saskatchewan Medical Association
Saskatchewan Union of Nurses
Saskatchewan College of Family Physicians
Resident Doctors of Saskatchewan
Student Medical Society of Saskatchewan
Saskatchewan College of Podiatrists
Saskatchewan Dietitians Association
Saskatchewan College of Respiratory Therapists
Saskatchewan Association of Licensed Practical Nurses
Pharmacy Association of Saskatchewan
Saskatchewan College of Pharmacy Professionals
College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan
Saskatchewan College of Paramedics
Registered Psychiatric Nurses Association of Saskatchewan
Saskatchewan Dental Assistants' Association
Chiropractors' Association of Saskatchewan
Saskatchewan Society of Medical Laboratory Technologists
College of Dental Surgeons of Saskatchewan
Saskatchewan College of Psychologists
Saskatchewan Association of Medical Radiation Technologists
Saskatchewan Registered Nurses Association
Saskatchewan Association of Optometrists
SEUI-West
Saskatchewan Society of Occupational Therapists
Health Sciences Association of Saskatchewan