

Increasing access to provincial data on SARS-CoV-2 vaccination in Canada

July 18 2022



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Roadblocks to accessing data on vaccine effectiveness from provincial health ministries impede researchers' ability to inform a national pandemic response and maintain public trust, according to an analysis in *CMAJ (Canadian Medical Association Journal)*.

Despite recommendations after the SARS outbreak in 2003 to fast-track

access to administrative health data to guide pandemic responses, timely access to important data is limited and can limit research abilities.

"Robust COVID-19 clinical data sets, with linkages to patient-level administrative data on vaccination, could be leveraged as clinical trial platforms to prospectively evaluate the safety and effectiveness of vaccines and novel COVID-19 therapies," writes Dr. Andrew McRae, University of Calgary's Cumming School of Medicine, with coauthors. "Without linkage to provincially held, patient-level vaccination data, the utility of carefully collected national COVID-19 clinical data sets is substantially constrained."

In this analysis, authors highlight how health ministries can release data for research while also protecting patients' privacy. Establishing partnerships between provincial data groups and Health Data Research Network to link data, enable timely data transfer and support research into [vaccine effectiveness](#) would be a key step.

"The absence of a coordinated, pan-Canadian, secure research environment for interprovincial data linkage and analysis has been highlighted as a shortcoming in Canadian research infrastructure that has limited the timeliness of Canadian research, both before and during the pandemic," the authors write.

Provincial health ministries hold COVID-19 vaccination data, but have been reluctant to share it with researchers, limiting researchers' ability to conduct Canadian [vaccine](#) research.

"Making administrative data available to independent researchers presents an important opportunity to validate the effectiveness data for vaccines and build public trust in Canada's public health and vaccination strategy."

More information: Reducing barriers to accessing administrative data on SARS-CoV-2 vaccination for research, *Canadian Medical Association Journal* (2022). [DOI: 10.1503/cmaj.211712](https://doi.org/10.1503/cmaj.211712)

Provided by Canadian Medical Association Journal

Citation: Increasing access to provincial data on SARS-CoV-2 vaccination in Canada (2022, July 18) retrieved 17 July 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-07-access-provincial-sars-cov-vaccination-canada.html>

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