

THIRD COVID WAVE LIKELY: INFECTIOUS DISEASE EXPERT

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As Ontario emerges from the throes of COVID-19's second wave, a Halton Healthcare doctor cautions that a third wave is likely on the way in April.

This was among the messages delivered by Dr. Ananda Ghosh, infectious diseases consultant and physician lead of quality and patient safety, during a Georgetown Hospital Foundation Town Hall meeting March 8.

Ghosh said there are a couple factors that play into the risk of a third wave — the easing of pandemic restrictions, which provides more opportunities for the virus to spread, and the COVID-19 variants of concern that could see the serious illness transmit more

easily.

"I think there is a possibility of a third wave coming," he said. "Do I think it will be larger than the second wave? I do not."

The local doctor said he's hopeful that even if case numbers do rise again, vaccinating vulnerable populations now will help reduce the number of hospitalizations and deaths. And while there's been much talk about the efficacy of the various COVID-19 vaccines, Ghosh cautioned that this information is only looking at how many people went on to develop symptoms, and how many tested positive for the virus.

He explained that it's also important to examine other aspects, such as how many people got sick enough that they had to go to the hospital.

"On those fronts, it looks



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Dr. Ananda Ghosh is the Infectious Diseases consultant and Physician Lead at Halton Healthcare's OTMH site.

like all the vaccines have important effects and do provide good protection," he said.

He noted that the best vaccine to receive "is the first one that's available to you. Having a vaccine is

better than not being vaccinated at all."

Currently, the Pfizer vaccine is available in Hal-

ton and is being used to immunize those aged 80 and over at Halton Public Health clinics, along with other priority populations at the Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital.

Ghosh said he expects that some of the Moderna vaccine will be allocated to the region soon, as well.

When it comes to the variants of concern, Ghosh said to a certain degree, mutations of COVID-19 were expected as "this is what viruses do."

"It's part of the reason we have to get a new flu shot every year. The flu virus is always changing," he said.

"We're watching this virus (COVID-19) more closely than we've ever watched any other virus, so we are picking up these changes and we're giving them names and we're following them."

For further details on vaccines, variants and case counts in Halton, visit halton.ca/COVID19.

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