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Health Council Report Reinforces CPhA and Pharmacist Priorities

On February 7, the Health Council of Canada (HCC) released its second annual report, [Health Care Renewal in Canada – Clearing the Road to Quality](#). The HCC was set up in 2003 to monitor provisions of the [2003 Health Accord](#) and [2004 10-Year Plan](#), and to provide advice on improving Canada's health care system. The HCC report focuses on the need to enhance the quality of primary health care and to deliver that care using interprofessional teams and health technology. The report also advises sustained action on pharmaceuticals management to improve patient safety and reduce adverse drug events.

The Canadian Pharmacists Association (CPhA) believes the Health Council's report and proposals address very well the real issues facing our healthcare system. They also reinforce the priorities and initiatives on which pharmacists have been focused in recent years – primary health care reform, health human resources (HHR), medication management, electronic health records (EHR) and home care.

Increasing access to healthcare is important but so is delivery that is not fragmented or inefficient. The best way of delivering seamless quality care, while reducing costs and wait times, is through interdisciplinary teams in which pharmacists are key members. Many of these teams are already operational across Canada, often in pilot projects, and government needs to financially sustain this model.

We were pleased the Health Council recognized the importance of electronic health records, including e-prescribing, pharmacy information networks (PINs), telehealth and other e-health tools in improving patient safety. CPhA certainly agrees that, to reduce adverse events and improve outcomes, we need to pay more attention to pharmaceuticals management, in which pharmacists play a vital role. The importance of evidence-based prescribing and monitoring of drug therapy cannot be overlooked in a quest to manage rising drug costs. We also hope the National Pharmaceuticals Strategy, due in June, will reflect the HCC recommendation to focus on standardizing and improving public drug coverage in order to ensure drug costs are not a barrier to access.

Finally, CPhA is gratified by the number of HCC references to e-Therapeutics and their quote: “we urge prescribers to adopt this new tool to increase the efficiency and accuracy of prescribing while preventing adverse drug events”. HCC recognizes that launching e-Therapeutics is significant progress in meeting their advice from the 2005 annual report to invest in the development of unbiased, evidence-based drug information. [e-Therapeutics](#) is an electronic clinical decision support system developed by CPhA (with contributions from Health Canada) that provides point-of-care access to current, Canadian drug and therapeutic information via a web portal and handheld applications.

Correlating HCC Proposals with CPhA Action

The Health Council of Canada's *Health Care Renewal in Canada – Clearing the Road to Quality* report proposes three pathways and 12 focus areas to help improve Canada's health care system. CPhA and pharmacists are active in the majority of these areas. Our priorities are aligned with the directions highlighted by the Council, as described below.

Pathway One: Improve Access to Needed Healthcare

Primary Health Care

HCC report proposes: aggressive focus on faster implementation of interprofessional teams; greater use of telehealth technologies to improve timely access; sustaining and expanding successful innovation models.

- CPhA is leading the development of a *Blueprint for Action for the Pharmacy Profession in Canada*. This will be a strategic action plan that provides direction on the changes that are essential if the profession is to expand to better meet the needs of Canadians. Reforms in the Canadian health care system, particularly in primary health care, and the increasing recognition of the need to improve the quality and safety of drug therapy, present tremendous opportunities for the pharmacy profession.
- [CPhA's recommendations to the Romanow Commission](#) “that pharmacists can play an increasingly important role as part of the primary health care team” were well reflected in the [final 2002 report on the future of health care](#).
- In 2004, CPhA produced and widely disseminated to government and stakeholders a white paper exploring the roles of the pharmacist in a renewed health care system ([Pharmacists in Primary Health Care](#)).
- CPhA is on the steering committee for two national collaborative care initiatives funded by the [Primary Health Care Transition Fund](#) (PHCTF): [Enhancing Interdisciplinary Collaboration in Primary Health Care](#) and the [Canadian Collaborative Mental Health Initiative](#).
- In 2005, CPhA was a partner in the PHCTF's [Primary Health Care Awareness Strategy](#), a multi-faceted national advertising campaign to increase Canadians' awareness of the concept of primary health care. A PHC supplement in *The Globe and Mail* and *Actualité* contained a large ad promoting pharmacists as accessible health care providers, as well as a feature story on e-Therapeutics. Materials were distributed to pharmacies to provide to clients.
- CPhA is on the Multisectorial Advisory Committee for the [IMPACT Program](#), which involves integrating pharmacists as a member of the collaborative team in family practice settings in Ontario.

Health Human Resources

HCC report proposes: intensified, interprofessional education of adequate numbers of healthcare workers; enabling them to practice to their full potential in new delivery models; collaboration in workforce planning.

- CPhA is leading, in partnership with other national pharmacy organizations, a 30-month, \$1.48 million study funded by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. The project comprises 12 fact-finding studies that will provide a better understanding of the Canadian pharmacy workforce and the challenges it is facing. Recommendations will be made to ensure the profession is ready for the future and the Study includes a specific communication strategy targeted at governments.
- CPhA is working with the [Canadian Institute for Health Information](#) and other pharmacy organizations to develop a database of pharmacists that will provide annual data on the pharmacist workforce to further support HR planning.
- In 2003, CPhA partnered with the Canadian Medical Association and the Canadian Nurses Association on a [joint statement on scopes of practice](#).

Home Care

HCC report proposes: expansion of publicly-funded services to assist those with chronic diseases; improving the Compassionate Care Benefits Program; harmonizing home care and job protection programs.

- In 2004, CPhA developed a [program to help home support workers](#) identify medication related problems in their patients. These resources are currently being adapted for family caregivers.
- CPhA has a [position paper on the role of the pharmacist in home care](#), that made specific recommendations for improving medication management to ensure optimal outcomes.

Pharmaceuticals Management

HCC report proposes: standardizing public drug coverage, focusing on those without coverage; evidence-based decision making about prescribing and drug coverage; electronic drug information systems for health care providers; banning of direct-to-consumer advertising (DTCA).

- CPhA is taking part in consultations around the [National Pharmaceuticals Strategy](#) (NPS) and is now developing a discussion paper that brings together material and information related to NPS priorities (national drug formulary, e-prescribing, safety and effectiveness, catastrophic drug coverage and rising drug costs).
- CPhA has developed a series of brief papers on [drug purchasing and cost-containment strategies](#), to support informed debate on this issue.
- CPhA has developed the concept of and is advocating for a National Medication Management Centre to foster a broader, integrated approach to improving drug therapy.

- [e-Therapeutics](#) is a clinical decision support tool recommended for adoption by the HCC. It integrates content from CPhA's *e-CPS* and *Therapeutic Choices* with other Canadian evidence-based resources, a drug interaction database, drug costs and public drug plan coverage. The system is now available for purchase from CPhA.
- In 2000, CPhA produced a [position paper opposing DCTA](#); we have also collaborated with CMA and other health care and consumer associations to ensure that decision-makers are aware of the impact DCTA could have on our health care system.

Pathway Two: Improve Quality of Care

Patient Safety

HCC report proposes: better supports for patient safety initiatives in Canada; proposes mandatory accreditation of health care facilities and public release of reports; re-examination of the issue of no-fault compensation.

- CPhA played a leadership role in the establishment of the [Canadian Patient Safety Institute \(CPSI\)](#) and successfully nominated a pharmacist to the founding Board. We're participating with CPSI on their [Safer Healthcare Now campaign](#) and Disclosure project.
- CPhA's [Seamless Care book](#) is a resource for pharmacists to implement continuous care programs, aimed at minimizing the risk of adverse drug events between hospital and home settings.
- New drug safety information is readily available to practitioners through e-Therapeutics and with direct links to advisories from e-CPS drug monographs.

Information Management Systems

HCC report proposes: faster development of electronic health records (EHRs) and use of linked electronic systems for patient records, drug profiles, e-prescribing and clinical decision-making; more upfront investment to create and implement electronic systems; stimulate adoption of EHRs by providers.

- CPhA has long supported the development of pan-Canadian EHRs and is recognized as a leader in pharmacy health informatics and the development of e-health standards.
- CPhA's e-claims standard is used to adjudicate over 250 million prescriptions each year and has evolved into the internationally recognized [National e-Claims Standard \(NeCST\)](#).
- CPhA is working closely with other pharmacy organizations to position pharmacists with respect to e-health issues and to develop an action plan for e-Pharmacy in Canada. This includes collaboration with [Canada Health Infoway](#) and provinces that are developing Drug Information Systems (DIS) and e-prescribing applications.
- In January, CPhA, CACDS and CSHP approved a joint e-pharmacy document, *Principles and Elements for Optimal Pharmacy Participation in the Development of Pharmacy Information Networks*.
- e-Therapeutics was developed using health information standards that allow for integration with pharmacy systems, physician office systems and DIS.

Pathway Three: Improve Population Health

Chronic diseases

HCC report proposes: investment in programs, integrated with primary health care teams, to prevent chronic diseases; ensuring these teams have access to information tools to help them better manage patients with complex diseases.

- CPhA's publications, *Therapeutic Choices* and *Patient Self Care*, and e-Therapeutics are key resources for healthcare providers to better manage chronic diseases.
- CPhA developed the [Just Checking – Pharmacheck tool](#) to help pharmacists and patients manage multiple prescriptions.
- CPhA is involved with numerous [disease organizations and coalitions](#) to develop guidelines and resources and provide advice from the pharmacy perspective.

Healthy Living Strategies

HCC report proposes: collaboration to measure progress; a shift in funding priorities to stimulate progress in healthy living.

- CPhA is close to finishing Phase II of a tobacco cessation training program that provide effective strategies to help their clients stop smoking. This is funded by Health Canada.
- CPhA provides an [annual influenza guide and resources to pharmacists](#) to help them promote flu vaccines.
- CPhA is involved with the [Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care](#) to develop evidence-based recommendations for preventive health interventions.
- CPhA was involved in a number of working groups for the development of the [Canadian Pandemic Influenza Plan](#). We have just received funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada to develop pharmacist-specific communications pieces related to an impending pandemic. This is the first step towards developing a profession-wide communication plan for health emergencies.
- CPhA played a leading role in increasing women's access to emergency contraception to address the public health issue of unwanted pregnancies. To [support pharmacists in providing ECP services](#), we developed a training program, practice guidelines and patient counselling tools and are involved in national awareness campaigns.