



CANADIAN PHARMACISTS ASSOCIATION

# Election Brief



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PHARMACISTS  
ASSOCIATION

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PHARMACIENS  
DU CANADA

# Pharmacists

## The Most Accessible Health Provider in Canada

Health care in Canada is undergoing significant changes and challenges. The impact of new technologies, an aging population, increased cost pressures and greater demands for service are just a few of the challenges that the Canadian health care model is facing.

Increasingly over the past several years, governments have come to recognize the role that pharmacists can play in addressing several of the challenges that health care in Canada is facing. As the most accessible health provider in Canada today, pharmacists are well placed to address challenges related to sustainability, access, drug safety and quality of care. Over the past decade, there has been a significant increase in pharmacists' scope of practice and increased recognition as health care providers. As an example, the following 2 charts demonstrate how significantly the role that pharmacists play in the delivery of health care has changed throughout Canada between 2005 and 2015.

## Better Health, Better Care, Better Value

Pharmacists are Canada's most trusted and accessible health care providers. Every day pharmacists are making a positive difference in the health and well-being of Canadians. Our vision is a health care system that delivers on the promise of Better Health, Better Care, Better Value. To reach this vision, Canada's political leaders need to address the

# 2005

## Pharmacists' Expanded Scope of Practice in Canada

	 Implemented in jurisdiction	 Pending implementation	 Not implemented										
	BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	QC	NB	NS	PEI	NL	NWT	YT	NU
Provide emergency prescription refills													
Renew/extend prescriptions													
Change drug dosage/formulation													
Make therapeutic substitution													
Prescribe for minor ailments/conditions													
Initiate prescription drug therapy													
Order and interpret lab tests													
Administer a drug by injection													
Regulated Pharmacy Technicians													

key issues affecting pharmacists' ability to deliver the high-quality health care services Canadians deserve.

Today many Canadians don't have appropriate and comparable access to the medications and pharmacy services they need to be healthy. To ensure a healthy population, we must also improve the safety and effectiveness of Canada's drug supply while at the same time making key investments into health innovation to ensure both quality and value. The ideas contained in this platform are intended to achieve just that.

Pharmacists are well placed to continue delivering quality, accessible care to Canadians, and to helping meet the challenges facing the overall health care system. However, in order to fulfill this enhanced role, barriers to optimizing pharmacists' provision of care must be addressed. Throughout Election 2015, the Canadian Pharmacists Association (CPhA) will be calling on federal political candidates to commit to addressing three key barriers preventing pharmacists from being able to deliver more effective, quality, and accessible care to Canadians. These three areas include:

- Introduce a Pan-Canadian Pharmacare Program
- Implement a National Plan for e-Prescribing
- Develop a Strengthened National Immunization Strategy for Canada

By acting on these three priority issues, the federal government would be providing Canada's 39,000 pharmacists with the tools to be able to deliver more innovative, accessible, effective, and sustainable health care to Canadians. These are solutions that benefit everyone.

# 2015

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				BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	QC	NB	NS	PEI	NL	NWT	YT	NU
Provide emergency prescription refills																
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# Introduce a Pan-Canadian Pharmacare Program

All developed countries with universal health care provide universal coverage for prescription drugs – except Canada. Nationwide, just 42% of prescription drug costs are publicly funded, compared to 90% of hospital costs and 98% of physician costs.<sup>1,2</sup> While every province and territory offers some level of coverage in addition to private insurance plans, many Canadians can't afford to fill their prescriptions.<sup>3</sup>

Prescription medications can prevent illness, manage symptoms, and even cure disease – making them one of the most cost-effective health interventions available. As leaders in the healthcare field, pharmacists are keenly aware that public policy gaps exist with regard to medication accessibility for patients. A cooperative approach is required by governments, health care provider groups, private payers, and other stakeholders to reduce the barriers for Canadians to access necessary medications.

CPhA believes that a pan-Canadian pharmacare program must address existing gaps in coverage between public and private systems, protect Canadians from undue financial hardship and guarantee access to a stable supply of clinically and cost-effective medications. All Canadians should also have access to pharmacy services, regardless of the province or territory in which they live. Medication management, medication safety and effectiveness, optimal prescribing, monitoring, and adherence are critical components of safe and effective drug therapy.

Recent evidence from the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) and Canada's Patented Medicine Price Review Board (PMPRB) clearly shows that growth in drug spending in Canada continues to decline.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, governments remain focused on pharmaceutical cost containment, instead of improving care and health outcomes or value for health dollars. This approach risks missed opportunities for cost savings in other areas of the health system through the impact of pharmacy services like improved medication adherence, early detection, chronic disease management and preventative health measures.



The inclusion of access to pharmacy services under a pharmacare model is key to achieving better outcomes and cost savings. Access to necessary medications is only one component; patients also require access to the full range of pharmacy services. Pharmacists provide the expert advice and guidance required by governments to ensure Canadians have access to pharmacy services and appropriate drug therapies.

CPhA is seeking commitment from all federal political parties to work with the provinces/territories, health care professionals and other stakeholders towards the development of a pan-Canadian pharmacare program. Such a program must address coverage gaps between public and private systems, protect Canadians from undue financial hardship, and guarantee access to a stable supply of clinically and cost-effective medications. Furthermore, the inclusion of access to pharmacy services under a pharmacare model is key to achieving better health outcomes and cost savings.

1. CIHI. 2014. National Health Expenditure Trends, 1975 to 2014. Ottawa: Canadian Institute for Health Information.
2. Prescribed Drug Spending in Canada, 2013: A Focus on Public Drug Programs. Canadian Institute for Health Information.
3. Steven Morgan and Jamie Daw, "Canadian Pharmacare: Looking Back, Looking Forward," *Healthcare Policy* 8, no. 1 (2012): 16.
4. *PMPRB Annual Public Drug Plan Expenditure Report 2012/13*. 2015. Patented Medicine Prices Review Board. <http://www.pmprb-cepmb.gc.ca/CMFiles/NPDUIS/PMPRBCompassRx-31-03-2015-Eng.pdf>. *National Health Expenditure Trends, 1975 to 2014*. 2014. Canadian Institute for Health Information. [https://www.cihi.ca/en/nhex\\_2014\\_report\\_en.pdf](https://www.cihi.ca/en/nhex_2014_report_en.pdf).

# Implement a National Plan for e-Prescribing

E-prescribing (also known as e-Rx) is the electronic sharing of prescription information between health providers. It is a means of communicating important prescription information between pharmacists, physicians, nurses, and other relevant providers. At a time when most information in our country is shared electronically, the vast majority of prescribed medication information is still shared via handwritten or faxed prescriptions.

A major benefit of e-prescribing is its positive impact on patient care and safety. When implemented, e-prescribing reduces the possibility of errors, reduces back and forth communication between health care providers, and allows for the integration of safety and alert systems when prescriptions are issued. These benefits not only accrue to the patient individually, but to the overall health care system by increasing the safety of dispensing and monitoring of medication therapy, and it helps inform decision-making by making medication history, drug, therapeutic, formulary and cost information available at the point of prescribing.<sup>5</sup>

Health Canada has been clear in its support for the use of e-prescribing. A 2009 report by CPhA and the Canadian Association of Chain Drug Stores contained the following Health Canada opinion: “There are significant benefits associated with the implementation of e-Rx including the potential to reduce the incidence of medication and dispensing errors caused by illegible prescriptions, a potential decline in adverse drug reactions and the timely transmission of prescription information from practitioner to pharmacist. Health Canada recognizes these benefits and supports the implementation of e-Rx.” Furthermore, in 2013, the Canadian Pharmacists Association and the Canadian Medical Association released the following vision in a joint statement: “By 2015, e-prescribing will be the means by which prescriptions are generated for Canadians.”<sup>6</sup>

Despite the support for e-prescribing, there is no question that Canada lags far behind in its use, and that the CPhA/CMA vision articulated in 2013 is nowhere near reality. In a 2014 survey of pharmacists conducted by the Canadian Pharmacists Association and Canada Health Infoway, when pharmacists were asked to estimate the percentage of total weekly

prescriptions received in their pharmacy directly through a physician's e-prescribing system, 88% of respondents said "never", with a further 8% saying less than 10% of the time. When asked what improvements an e-prescribing system would bring, pharmacists cited increasing productivity and less time required to process prescriptions, better accuracy in the quality of prescription information and enhanced interprofessional collaboration - in short, better and more effective care for patients.<sup>7</sup>

The federal government needs to work with key stakeholders, including the provinces and territories, to develop a common harmonized system for e-prescribing, and then develop a plan to implement. Ensuring patient confidentiality must be central to these efforts.

CPhA is looking for the federal government to invest in the development and implementation of a pan-Canadian system for e-prescribing that ensures that Canadians' prescription information can be electronically shared and accessed between relevant health providers, while respecting patient privacy and confidentiality.

E-prescribing should also facilitate access to evidence-based drug therapy information to support cost-effective prescribing.

CPhA is calling on all parties to work with the provinces/territories, health care professionals and other stakeholders to invest in a seamless e-prescribing system in Canada. CPhA is looking for the federal government to support the development and implementation of a common harmonized system for e-prescribing that ensures that Canadians' prescription information can be electronically shared and accessed between relevant health providers, while respecting patient privacy and confidentiality.

5. "Recommendations for the Implementation of Electronic Prescriptions in Canada", Canadian Pharmacists Association and Canadian Association of Chain Drug Stores, 2009. Available at [www.pharmacists.ca/cpha-ca/assets/File/cpha-on-the-issues/PPePrescriptionImplementation.pdf](http://www.pharmacists.ca/cpha-ca/assets/File/cpha-on-the-issues/PPePrescriptionImplementation.pdf)
6. Available at [www.pharmacists.ca/cpha-ca/assets/File/ePrescribingStatementENG2013.pdf](http://www.pharmacists.ca/cpha-ca/assets/File/ePrescribingStatementENG2013.pdf).
7. "Final Report: Survey of Canadian Community Pharmacists: Use of Digital Health Technologies in Practice", Commissioned by Canadian Pharmacists Association and Canada Health Infoway, 2014. Available at <https://www.infoway-inforoute.ca/en/what-we-do/news-events/newsroom/2014-news-releases/6312-community-pharmacists-recognize-the-opportunity-in-digital-health>.



# Develop a Strengthened National Immunization Strategy for Canada

Child immunization rates in Canada are falling short of herd immunity and Canada's immunization coverage goals, according to recently released national data on immunization rates.<sup>8</sup> In fact, 23% of children are not receiving the full four recommended doses of the diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus vaccine by age two. While a large majority of Canadian children are immunized against common illness such as measles, mumps, rubella, meningitis and polio, Canada is still falling behind on the issue of early childhood immunization, placing 28th out of 29 comparator countries according to a 2013 UNICEF report.<sup>9</sup> Clearly there is room for improvement.

Although Canada has had a National Immunization Strategy in place previously, there are gaps that need to be addressed. For instance, Canada is without a national immunization registry. Canada also lacks a harmonized routine immunization schedule. Additional promotion and communication regarding the importance of immunization to public health is sorely needed. Public funding for a range of early childhood immunizations needs to be a priority. And although some provincial immunization and vaccination data is available, it is not harmonized across provincial and territorial jurisdictions, and therefore the establishment of pan-Canadian reporting standards needs to be a priority.

According to the 2015 report "Community Pharmacy: Trends and Insights", 73% of pharmacies across Canada currently provide some form of immunization services, even though immunization authority for pharmacists has been in place for only a few years.<sup>10</sup> Pharmacy has demonstrated that it has the capacity and willingness to play a central role in the implementation of a National Immunization Strategy. As part of this strategy, pharmacists in all jurisdictions, including pharmacists who provide care to federal



populations, should be granted greater immunization authority, and need to be properly compensated for that role.

The call for a strengthened pan-Canadian National Immunization Strategy is not new. Organizations such as the Canadian Public Health Association, the Canadian Paediatric Society, Immunize Canada, and many other national health stakeholders have long called for such a strategy. Given its central importance to the maintenance of public health, pharmacists are calling on federal politicians to commit to a multi-pronged, multi-stakeholder National Immunization Strategy, with pharmacists playing a key role.

Given Canada's relatively low rates of immunization compared to other industrialized countries, CPhA is calling for a revamped National Immunization Strategy. The goal of a revamped strategy would be to increase immunization rates through a comprehensive approach that would include further expanding pharmacists' scope of practice to administer vaccines. The National Strategy would also target increased research, a national registry, comparable access, and enhanced education/outreach, including building a partnership with the provinces/territories and health professionals to increase public awareness of the importance of vaccinations.

8. Childhood National Immunization Coverage Survey, 2013-2015. Statistics Canada. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/150721/dq150721c-eng.htm>.
9. "Child Well Being in Rich Countries: A Comparative Overview", United Nations Children's Fund, 2013. Available at [www.unicef.org/media/files/RC11-ENG-embargo.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/media/files/RC11-ENG-embargo.pdf).
10. "Community Pharmacy: Trends and Insights 2015", presented by Pharmacy Practice, 2015.

# Conclusion and Summary

There is no question that pharmacists represent a solution to addressing a number of key challenges facing the Canadian health care system. With nearly 28,000 pharmacists working in over 9,500 community pharmacies located in cities, towns and rural and remote communities across Canada, and another 10,000 pharmacists working in hospitals, primary care clinics and nursing homes, pharmacists represent the most accessible health provider available to Canadians, and as such, are extremely well positioned to provide solutions to many of the challenges facing Canada's health care system.

To summarize, in Election 2015, the Canadian Pharmacists Association is calling on federal political parties and candidates to support the following recommendations:

- 1 Introduce a Pan-Canadian Pharmacare Program**  
CPhA is seeking commitment from all federal political parties to work with the provinces/territories, health care professionals and other stakeholders towards the development of a pan-Canadian pharmacare program. Such a program must address coverage gaps between public and private systems, protect Canadians from undue financial hardship, and guarantee access to a stable supply of clinically and cost-effective medications. Furthermore, the inclusion of access to pharmacy services under a pharmacare model is key to achieving better health outcomes and cost savings.
- 2 Implement a National Plan for e-Prescribing**  
CPhA is calling on all parties to work with the provinces/territories, health care professionals and other stakeholders to invest in a seamless e-prescribing system in Canada. CPhA is looking for the federal government to support the development and implementation of a common harmonized system for e-prescribing that ensures that Canadians' prescription information can be electronically shared and accessed between relevant health providers, while respecting patient privacy and confidentiality.

### 3 Revamped National Immunization Strategy

Given Canada's relatively low rates of immunization compared to other industrialized countries, CPhA is calling for a revamped National Immunization Strategy. The goal of a revamped strategy would be to increase immunization rates through a comprehensive approach that would include further expanding pharmacists' scope of practice to administer vaccines. The National Strategy would also target increased research, a national registry, comparable access, and enhanced education/outreach, including building a partnership with the provinces/territories and health professional to increase public awareness of the importance of vaccinations.





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