



CPHA POSITION STATEMENT

Pharmacist Prescribing

The position of the Canadian Pharmacists Association (CPHA) on pharmacist prescribing is:

- All decisions related to medication management, including prescribing, must be collaborative, patient-centred and focused on addressing the health care needs of the patient.
- Collaboration with other health providers is an important and integral component to pharmacist prescribing and medication management. This includes close contact and ongoing two-way communication and documentation regarding drug therapy decisions. Prescribing by pharmacists should complement care provided by other health professionals.
- Pharmacists are medication experts and play a significant role in the prescribing and monitoring of medication to ensure safe and optimal use. Pharmacists will take on increased accountability and responsibility for patient-centred, outcomes-focussed care.
- The pharmacist, by having the authority to initiate, continue and modify prescriptions, can improve the safety and effectiveness of drug therapy. In addition, as the most accessible health care professional, pharmacists will be able to improve access to appropriate medication therapy for patients.
- A patient-pharmacist relationship is essential to allow a pharmacist to prescribe optimally and carry out follow-up activities.
- Pharmacists who prescribe should do so within their area of competence, scope of practice and with sufficient clinical knowledge of the patient.
- To support optimal medication management, pharmacists require access to the patient's relevant health information, which may include diagnosis, therapeutic intent and laboratory results. Pharmacists should also have the authority to order laboratory tests for the purpose of monitoring drug therapy outcomes.
- Actions related to prescribing and medication management need to be communicated verbally, in writing or through electronic media, when appropriate, to other health professionals in the circle of care. All actions should be supported by documentation. A shared electronic health record will facilitate this communication.
- Legislation and regulations should enable rather than oblige pharmacists to prescribe.
- Governments must ensure that legislation enabling pharmacist prescribing is consistent with other policies in health care. This includes recognition of the pharmacist as a prescriber for the purpose of reimbursement through public and private insurance plans.

CPHA is committed to obtaining recognition and authority for pharmacists to practise at a level that allows them to play a larger role in ensuring the quality of medication use and optimizing drug therapy to help patients achieve health goals that will improve their quality of life.



Background

The Canadian health care system has seen considerable change in the past few decades. Health care professions are evolving to meet the ever-increasing demands of delivering more complex care. Governments have issued a number of reports which all call for change to the way health care is delivered. Much of this change has focused on having the right health care professional provide the right service at the right time.

An expanded scope of practice for pharmacists is an international trend that includes primary health care reform, interprofessional collaboration, effective utilization of health human resources, and the need to improve safety and outcomes of drug therapy.

Traditionally in Canada, the authority to prescribe medications has rested with a small number of professions. Many Canadians consider prescribing as when a physician orders a medication to treat a specific condition. With changes to legislation or regulations in most Canadian provinces over the past four years, many pharmacists now have the ability to initiate, continue or modify/adapt drug therapy, ranging from renewing a continued care prescription to independent prescriptive authority.

Pharmacists are the most accessible health care professional. They have a university degree specializing in medications and their use. Pharmacists have the knowledge and skills to manage medications and optimize drug therapy to improve health outcomes of Canadians. Pharmacists, like all health care professionals, act in accordance with the codes of ethics and standards of practice of their profession. These require pharmacists to be responsible, accountable and act in the best interest of the patient.

Pharmacists have long had a prescriber role in the institutional setting in Canada, where they make significant contributions to the quality of drug therapy and patient outcomes by initiating, monitoring and adjusting drug therapy. In the community setting, pharmacists assess and triage patients for chronic and self-limiting conditions, and assess, recommend and monitor prescription and nonprescription drug therapy for thousands of Canadians each day.

Pharmacist prescribing includes a wide range of activities, such as:

- prescribing over-the-counter and prescription drugs to treat minor, self-diagnosed or self-limiting disease conditions
- providing emergency supplies of prescribed medication to a patient
- monitoring and authorizing the refill of existing prescriptions to ensure appropriate and effective care
- modifying or adapting a prescription written by another prescriber to alter dosage, formulation, regimen or duration of the prescribed drug
- modifying or adapting a prescription written by another prescriber to provide a therapeutic alternative to improve drug therapy or provide continuity of therapy
- prescribing medications for patients through delegated authority and collaborative practice agreements, or by using protocols as established by institutions or jurisdictions
- initiating or discontinuing a medication where the pharmacist, in collaboration with the physician and/or other health care professionals, provides comprehensive medication management