

From: Public & Professional Affairs Department
Sent: May 28, 2020 4:28 PM
Subject: The Daily: CPhA's COVID-19 Update for May 28



May 28, 2020

CPhA

CPhA issues release on drug availability/shortages

Yesterday CPhA issued a [release \(en français\)](#) showing that community pharmacists across Canada continue to be faced with drug supply challenges 2 months after the COVID-19 pandemic began, and remain very concerned about their ability to access the medications their patients need. Results from a new survey conducted by CPhA showed that during the first week of May only 3% of community pharmacists across Canada reported receiving their full order of medications for every order placed through wholesalers. During the same week, the majority of Canadian pharmacists (56-60%) received reduced quantities of medication supplies on most or all orders placed through wholesalers. [CTV News](#) and others subsequently reported on the survey. An [infographic \(en français\)](#) of the survey highlights is available on our website.

CPhA staff send virtual high five

For #ThankfulThursday #JeudiMerci this week, the staff at CPhA are sending a [virtual high five](#) and thanks to everyone contributing to pharmacy's fight against COVID-19. High five!

COVID Conversations webinar recording now available: The Role of Pharmacy in Public and Population Health

Our latest COVID Conversations webinar, [The Role of Pharmacy in Public and Population Health](#), is now available as a full recording or in short segments. This webinar featured leading pharmacist experts in public health and community pharmacy owners on the front lines in both Canada and the United States, who reviewed some of the pros and cons of pharmacists providing public health services. Our COVID Conversations webinars and recordings are open to all.

CPhA's COVID-19 web pages are being updated regularly at www.pharmacists.ca/covid19 and www.pharmacists.ca/covid19fr.

Provincial

Islanders asked not to stockpile prescription meds as limits lifted

The 30-day prescription supply limits have been lifted for PEI and Islanders are being asked to avoid stockpiling prescription drugs, [CBC reports](#). The 30-day limits were put in place in March to ensure everyone could get the drugs they needed, said Marion Dowling, PEI's chief of nursing. "The drug supply has become more stable, so we've been able to lift that restriction." In a statement supplied to CBC, the PEI Pharmacists Association (PEIPHA) says that the 30-day dispense measures have helped stabilize inventories and allowed orders to be filled more consistently. However, it said shortages and delivery impediments still exist, and some medications continue to be available on an allocation basis only.

AB limits distribution of masks, gowns and gloves

The Alberta government will [limit its distribution](#) of personal protective equipment (PPE) as more medical masks, gowns and gloves become available on the open market, says chief medical officer of health Dr. Deena Hinshaw. After June 30, pharmacies

will no longer be able to request any PPE through the Provincial Operations Centre, and will have to access PPE from an alternate supplier. According to the province, there will be no changes in the PPE supply for pharmacists conducting COVID-19 screening and testing.

National

Poll finds half of Canadians feel governments are hiding something about COVID-19

Half of Canadians believe they are not getting the whole truth from their governments about COVID-19, [a new poll suggests](#), and some also believe conspiracy theories about where the novel coronavirus began. The most recent survey from Leger and the Association for Canadian Studies found that 50% of respondents felt governments were deliberately withholding information about the virus, which has killed thousands and ground the economy to a halt.

Health Canada interim order responds to COVID-19 treatment options

Health Canada has approved an [Interim Order Respecting Clinical Trials for Medical Devices and Drugs Relating to COVID-19](#) (IO) to respond to the urgent need for COVID-19 diagnosis, treatment, mitigation or prevention options. The IO introduces a new pathway to facilitate the conduct of clinical trials in Canada to investigate and offer patients access to potential COVID-19 drugs and medical devices, while upholding strong patient safety requirements. Health Canada has also published a [Notice and Guidance Document](#) to accompany the IO.

Safety advisory issued on hand sanitizer

Health Canada has issued a [safety alert](#) as some units of Triton Hand Sanitizer containing technical-grade ethanol were distributed and sold without the required risk information on the label. Health Canada recently issued an advisory on the temporary authorization of technical-grade ethanol in hand sanitizer products.

International

Fears of COVID-19 second wave prompt flu push at US pharmacies, drug makers

US pharmacy chains are preparing a big push for flu vaccinations when the season kicks off in October, hoping to curb tens of thousands of serious cases that could coincide with a second wave of coronavirus infections, [says Reuters](#). Robert Redfield, director at the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), has said that flu and COVID-19 combined could exact a heavier toll on Americans than the initial coronavirus outbreak that began this winter. Pharmacies, public health clinics and other flu shot providers may need to develop drive-up clinics – popular with COVID-19 diagnostic tests – for flu vaccines, said Dr. Nancy Messonnier, director of the CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Disease.

Critical shortage of flu shots hits regional areas

More than half of Australian general practitioners say they have battled critical flu vaccination shortages caused by distribution problems that have resulted in some clinics being flooded with flu jabs and others forced to ration supply, [says The Age](#). Doctors have reported waiting lists hundreds of patients long sparked by record demand for the flu shot amid the dual threat of being infected with influenza and COVID-19. The Pharmacy Guild of Australia has reported shortages this year, too, with some stores selling out of early vaccine supplies in record time due to anxiety about COVID-19. New data from the Australian Immunisation Register revealed 7.3 million flu shots had been administered so far this year, compared to 4.5 million this time last year.

GSK aims for one billion doses of booster as COVID-19 vaccine race heats up

GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) laid out plans to produce 1 billion doses of vaccine adjuvants, or efficacy boosters, for COVID-19 shots next year, as the race to develop a successful solution to the coronavirus crisis heats up, [Reuters writes](#). The company is in talks with governments to back the manufacturing expansion of adjuvants that would help to scale up production of future vaccines. GSK would not disclose the costs, saying only that production would take place at sites in Europe and North America.

Merck leaps into COVID-19 vaccine race

Merck, one of the largest vaccine makers in the world, is entering the COVID-19 arena with the announcement it is developing 2 different vaccines for COVID-19 and is also licensing an oral drug that might treat the virus, [says STAT](#). Merck is buying Vienna-based Themis, which is developing an experimental COVID-19 vaccine based on a measles vaccine that could begin human studies soon. It is also partnering with the non-profit IAVI on the development of a vaccine related to Merck's existing Ebola vaccine that could enter human studies later this year, and it is licensing an experimental drug from a small company called Ridgeback Biotherapeutics.

FDA updates its temporary guidance for compounding

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) [announced updates](#) for the temporary policy for compounding of certain drugs used for hospitalized COVID-19 patients. The updates include product reporting by outsourcing facilities so that hospitals may use this information to determine the origination of the compounded drug used for COVID-19 patients. Additionally, these updates include clarification on testing container-closures, product stability, filling orders for copies of FDA-approved products, and reporting of adverse events associated with drugs compounded under this guidance.

Pharmacists not included for PPE ordering 'really disappointing'

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS) England is disappointed that pharmacists are not included in a new [online portal](#) to help primary and social care providers order critical PPE. RPS England chair Claire Anderson [says](#) it is disappointing that pharmacy has been left out. "Pharmacies are one of the last places keeping their doors open to the public without an appointment and yet seemingly an afterthought when it comes to sourcing PPE for staff. We've raised this repeatedly with the Government and have called for pharmacy to urgently being included in the PPE Portal."

UK: Remdesivir to be offered under early access program

The UK's Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency reached a deal to provide remdesivir under its Early Access to Medicines Scheme, [PharmaTimes reports](#). The company will provide the drug to the National Health Service free of charge throughout the period that the medicine is in the program. So far, the pandemic has infected more than 265,000 people in the UK and claimed at least 37,000 lives.

France, Italy, Belgium act to stop use of hydroxychloroquine for COVID-19 over safety fears

France, Italy and Belgium have acted to halt the use of hydroxychloroquine to treat patients suffering from COVID-19 amid questions about the safety of the generic anti-malaria drug, [Reuters reports](#). The move by 3 of the countries hardest hit by coronavirus infections and deaths follows a World Health Organization decision earlier this week to pause a large trial of hydroxychloroquine due to safety concerns.

Newsorthy

Why can't your pharmacist prescribe basic drugs?

The COVID-19 pandemic could have brought a bigger role for pharmacists that would improve health care for British Columbians, advocates and experts say in an [article published in The Tyee](#). But the opportunity to increase patient safety, cut costs and give doctors more time to treat patients will be missed, they fear. The British Columbia Pharmacy Association has been calling on the government to let pharmacists play a larger role in the care system for years, saying they're trained to provide more services. This is the time to make changes, they say.

Worth Repeating

"For patients without their rescue inhaler, this can mean an asthma attack. For patients without their ARB, this can mean elevated blood pressure and an increased risk of heart attack and stroke for some. For patients without their narcotic, this can mean withdrawal and a loss of tolerance, with the risk of overdose upon restarting." — Nardine Nakhla, community pharmacist and professor at the University of Waterloo, commenting in a [CTV report](#) on CPhA's pharmacist survey on the far-reaching consequences when people don't have timely access to their medications.

This daily COVID-19 update is compiled by the Canadian Pharmacists Association. To unsubscribe, please reply to this email with "Unsubscribe" in the subject line.

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