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Canadian
Pharmacists
Association

Association des
pharmaciens
du Canada

The Weekly

Bringing the world of pharmacy together

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CPhA

CPhA: Our 2023 priorities

In [a post originally published by Canadian Healthcare Network](#), CPhA's Chair Dr. Shawn Bugden outlines 5 of our priorities for improving pharmacy practice and supporting pharmacy professionals in 2023: supporting and strengthening our workforce; mental health; drug shortages; creating front-line solutions and resources; and diversity, equity and inclusion. "With 2023 well underway, many of us are hoping for a less difficult year—one that builds on the momentum we have and one that fully recognizes the critical and growing role that pharmacists are playing in our health-care system," he writes. "Our priorities this year are wide-ranging, but they're all aimed at improving pharmacy practice and supporting the professionals who underpin it."

February is Black History Month

February 2023 marks the 28th official [Black History Month](#) in Canada. This month, CPhA will be focusing on celebrating Black pharmacy professionals in Canada, amplifying their voices and raising awareness about Black health in Canada. Primarily, we are pleased to support and promote "A Black History to Remember 2023: The Canadian Pharmacy Edition." This campaign was fully

developed and launched by Mary Adegboyega, and an incredible group of Canadian Black pharmacy professionals have worked tirelessly to create the content. The campaign celebrates and recognizes Black pharmacy professionals in Canada and shares more about how we can all better support Black patients. Be sure to follow along on [LinkedIn](#) and [Instagram](#) for daily updates. Our [website](#) also highlights elements of the campaign, as well as additional tools, information, and resources to support diversity, equity and inclusion for our Black pharmacist colleagues and the patients we serve.

Pharmacy Appreciation Month: Call for photos

Pharmacy Appreciation Month (PAM) is just around the corner! Pharmacy teams have been an immense force supporting Canadians and our health-care system through the many challenges we face, and we want to celebrate you and the incredible work you're doing every day. Help us celebrate you and your colleagues this March by sending us a photo of you or your pharmacy team that we can feature in our PAM 2023 materials. Please include the name and location (city and province/territory) of your pharmacy and the full names of any team members in the photo. Email us at socialmedia@pharmacists.ca to participate.

Upcoming webinar: The pharmacist's role in head and neck cancer prevention

Calling all licensed health-care professionals! Join us on February 28 from 7:00–8:00pm ET to learn about the pharmacist's role in preventing HPV-related head and neck cancer among Canadians by integrating a sustainable immunization program into a busy community pharmacy practice. The speakers will also review vaccination and access to care opportunities created during the COVID-19 pandemic and discuss strategies for alleviating some of these pressures. *This webinar is being hosted by CPhA on behalf of Merck Canada Inc.* and is not accredited. [Register now](#).

CPJ: New digital edition and CARD supplement available now

While the *Canadian Pharmacists Journal* is no longer available in print, we're happy to present our new digital issue, which will be published 6 times per year. The digital edition of the January/February 2023 issue is now available via [CPJ Online](#). The January/February 2023 [issue supplement](#) on the CARD

(Comfort Ask Relax Distract) vaccine delivery framework is also now available online, featuring a range of research and information on how pharmacists and other health-care practitioners can use the CARD system to help make the vaccination process go smoothly for patients of all ages.

Pharmacy on the front lines

Antibiotic shortage still a worry, Alberta doctors and pharmacists say

A shortage of antibiotics that has dragged on for months continues to make it difficult for Alberta parents to find treatment for their sick children, [CBC reports](#). According to the Drug Shortages Canada database, 8 drug companies are reporting shortages of different forms of amoxicillin due to increased demand or manufacturing disruptions. “It’s been very difficult when parents come in very worried and they’ve been to 2 or 3 pharmacies and no one has it,” said Randy Howden, a Calgary pharmacist and owner of the Sunridge and Crowfoot locations of The Medicine Shoppe. Compounding pharmacies like his have been making amoxicillin suspension for children when there’s no stock available. According to Howden, while shelves were entirely empty at the end of 2022, pharmacies are now able to order small amounts of amoxicillin from time to time. “Today, I was able to order 4 bottles,” he said. “It’s not a huge amount at all. It might be enough to get us through the next day if we’re lucky.”

Provincial

Primary care clinics in pharmacists exceed expectations: PANS

Spend 10 minutes at the pharmacy at Shopper’s Drug Mart on Wyse Road in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, and you’ll notice a lot of foot traffic. Some patients are there to pick up prescriptions, but others are there for an appointment to see a pharmacist. The pharmacy is one of 12 in Nova Scotia with a primary care clinic—a set-up similar to a doctor’s office where a pharmacist dedicates their day to seeing patients. The model is being described as a game-changer by the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia (PANS). Its CEO, Allison Bodnar, noted the program is already exceeding expectations. “I was at a couple of the

grand openings yesterday and team members came up to me and said ‘this is a dream come true. This is what I went to pharmacy school to do. I’ve been waiting for this for 10 years,’” she [told CTV News](#). She said 12 more clinics will open across Nova Scotia in May. “We should get to the point where we are utilizing all 318 of our pharmacy teams this way,” Bodnar said. Pharmacists are trained to assess and prescribe for a long list of needs or ailments such as strep throat, birth control, shingles treatment and more. Bodnar believes this model is helping to maximize a pharmacist’s skillset.

National

Premiers accept federal health-care funding proposal

Canada’s premiers have accepted Ottawa’s proposal to inject billions of dollars into provincial health-care systems, [CBC reports](#). Prime Minister Justin Trudeau met with Canada’s premiers last week to pitch a plan to send roughly \$46.2 billion in new money to the provinces and territories over 10 years to help prop up a faltering health-care system. The premiers met on February 13 to discuss the proposal. Ottawa will now hold bilateral meetings with individual provinces to finalize funding agreements. Ottawa’s proposal includes a top-up to the Canada Health Transfer (CHT) and new money directed at 4 priority areas: family health services, health workers and backlogs, mental health and substance use, and a “modernized health system.” To access the enhanced CHT, provinces must first commit to improving how health data is “collected, shared, used and reported to Canadians to promote greater transparency on results, and to help manage public health emergencies,” the government said in a background document supplied to reporters. The funding for the shared priorities will also be contingent on the provinces and territories developing “action plans” detailing how these funds will be spent and how progress will be measured.

Paxlovid slashed severe outcomes for at-risk patients after Omicron surge, study finds

Canadians at risk of severe illness from COVID-19 who took the antiviral medication Paxlovid significantly reduced their likelihood of being hospitalized or dying from the virus after the Omicron surge, according to [new research published in the Canadian Medical Association Journal](#). The study, which

looked at data from thousands of Ontarians, measured the effectiveness of the drug nirmatrelvir–ritonavir, which is sold under the brand name Paxlovid, and how well it prevented severe illness from COVID-19 after the Omicron variant was detected in Canada, [Global News reports](#). The findings show that hospital admissions and deaths were lower among those given Paxlovid than in those who were not. Most patients who received the antiviral drug in the study were over age 70, due to government criteria that limited the medication to patients who were older, had comorbidities or were under-vaccinated. This means the findings show those most vulnerable to severe outcomes from COVID-19 had significantly reduced odds of hospital admission and death from the virus after receiving Paxlovid.

International

US: FDA considers making naloxone available without prescription

Advisors to the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) are meeting on February 15 to discuss whether a nasal spray version of the opioid overdose antidote Narcan should be made available over the counter, [CNN reports](#). Baltimore-area company Emergent BioSolutions Inc. submitted an application to the FDA late last year to be allowed to sell generic naloxone hydrochloride without a prescription—the first such application for a naloxone spray. Emergent’s application was granted priority review after the FDA signalled that it would support submissions to improve access to the lifesaving medication. The meeting will involve the FDA’s Nonprescription Drugs Advisory Committee and the Anesthetic and Analgesic Drug Products Advisory Committee, which will hear evidence on the nasal spray. Research shows that a wider availability of naloxone could save lives, as opioid overdose numbers in the US skyrocket. Some studies suggest that if naloxone were available over the counter, more people would use it. It could reduce some of the stigma associated with the drug, since the purchaser would not have to interact directly with the pharmacist to get it.

US: Community pharmacies facing drug, staff shortages, NCPA survey finds

A new survey released by the National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPA) indicates that many independent community pharmacies are

experiencing ongoing drug shortage issues and difficulty filling open staff positions, [Drug Store News reports](#). The survey, which was conducted from January 23 to 30, 2023, continues NCPA's efforts to provide context on staffing concerns, supply chain issues, inflation or other economic pressures independent pharmacy owners and managers are facing. According to the latest survey, 93% of independent community pharmacies are facing a shortage of children's pain and fever relief medicine, 85% report a shortage of diabetes medicine, 80% say they are experiencing shortages of amoxicillin, and 97% say they are experiencing a shortage of Adderall. When it comes to labour issues, the survey found that pharmacy technicians continue to be in highest demand (80%) among those responding, followed by front end staff (43%), pharmacists (19%) and delivery drivers (17%).

US: CVS digs into primary care with \$9.5B Oak Street Health deal

CVS Health Corp. will buy Oak Street Health Inc. for about US\$9.5 billion (CAD\$12.6 billion) in cash, joining rivals in adding primary care to its portfolio as pressure mounts on its health insurance business, [Reuters reports](#). The deal—the company's third largest in the last decade—echoes moves by rivals Walgreens Boots Alliance, Cigna Corp and UnitedHealth Group Inc. as a focus on primary and urgent care delivery has increased since the COVID-19 pandemic. CVS Health, among the nation's largest pharmacy chains, pharmacy benefit managers and health insurers with its Aetna unit, had been in the market for a medical services acquisition since last year. The Oak Street deal will add over 160 primary care centres that offer routine health screening and diagnosis to older adults. CVS Chief Executive Karen Lynch said with the acquisition, the company could start to refer customers it reaches in home health assessments to Oak Street for care and ease their ability to get the prescriptions they need from CVS pharmacies.

UK: Patients in England not collecting NHS prescriptions because of cost, RPS says

Rising numbers of patients in England are failing to collect their medicines or asking pharmacists which ones they can "do without" because they cannot afford prescription charges, [a survey from the Royal Pharmaceutical Society \(RPS\) shows](#). Half of the 269 pharmacists who responded to the survey said they've seen an increase in the last 6 months in patients asking them which medicines on their prescription they can "do without" due to affordability issues.

“We are deeply concerned that people are having to make choices about their health based on their ability to pay,” Thorrun Govind, the chair of the RPS in England, [told the Guardian](#). “No one should have to make choices about rationing their medicines and no one should be faced with a financial barrier to getting the medicines they need.” The findings have prompted RPS to renew its calls for free prescriptions for people with long-term conditions in England. While National Health Service (NHS) prescriptions are free in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, most adults in England are charged a £9.35 fee per item—the equivalent of just over CAD\$15.

Ireland: Patient health at risk due to medicine shortage, pharmacists warn

More than 6 in 10 pharmacists fear the shortage of medicines is affecting the health outcomes of some patients, with particular concern around people with diabetes and epilepsy, according to a new survey from the Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU). The survey comes amid a worsening in the shortage of a range of medications, including some key drugs that are rationed between pharmacies, and patients who would normally be reimbursed for a drug who are having to pay out of pocket for unlicensed alternatives needed to fill the gap. Dermot Twomey, president of the IPU, [told the Irish Independent](#) that the survey found 65% of pharmacists believe supply difficulties are affecting patient outcomes. “Almost every pharmacist in Ireland has felt medicine shortages significantly increase this year,” Twomey said. Other pharmacists have cited a shortage of Ozempic, which is used to lower blood sugar in type 2 diabetes and is difficult to access for regular patients.

In Depth

How the World Health Organization helped kill a promising made-in-Canada vaccine

In a pandemic, a sizable amount of flexibility is required. The World Health Organization (WHO) has championed the need for out-of-the-box thinking on vaccine production and supplies to protect the world. But when faced with that very situation, the WHO evoked a 2005 policy and sentenced a promising

made-in-Canada vaccine to a tragic death because of a minority link with a tobacco company. [CTV News explains](#) what happened.

Worth Repeating

“The ability for pharmacists to prescribe and give patients access to medication in their moment of need helps prevent unnecessary hospital visits and offloads some of the burden our health-care colleagues face.” —Pharmacist Dr. Allen Tam [on the benefits of Ontario expanding scope of practice](#) for pharmacists, allowing them to prescribe medications for 13 minor ailments

This weekly update is compiled by the Canadian Pharmacists Association. Please note that this publication is meant to inform and is not a comprehensive list of information available. Be sure to check with your provincial regulatory authority or advocacy association for province-specific information. While we aim to ensure all information contained in this update is accurate, the situation is evolving rapidly and CPhA does not take responsibility for the content provided by other organizations and sources.

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