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Canadian
Pharmacists
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The Weekly

Bringing the world of pharmacy together

March 16, 2022

CPhA

CPhA joins health-care organizations to discuss health worker crisis

Canada's ailing health systems need some drastic intervention from federal and provincial governments if there is any hope of reviving them post-pandemic, an emergency summit of nearly 40 health-worker organizations, including CPhA, concluded at an emergency meeting on March 10. Health workers have now endured 2 difficult years of pandemic conditions, leading to serious burnout across nearly all sectors of the health-care system, [the Canadian Press reports](#). "The real shared experience across health-care workers and professionals is that the level of burnout is to a point now where it's really starting to threaten the sustainability of the system," said Canadian Medical Association (CMA) President Dr. Katharine Smart. The summit, hosted by CMA and the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA), was struck to chart a new course for health care in the face of widespread attrition.

CPhA recognized as one of the 100 Top Lobbyists by the Hill Times

For a second year in a row, CPhA was named as one of the 100 Top Lobbyists in 2022 [by the Hill Times](#). The publication compiled the annual list after reaching out to more than 20 lobbyists, including both in-house representatives and consultants. The list is not a popularity contest,

rather intended to showcase prominent lobbyists at the federal level based on their reputation and perceived effectiveness, as judged by their peers. CPhA's government affairs activities in 2021 and 2022 have increased significantly to showcase the tremendous work that pharmacy teams have done throughout the pandemic with a focus on bringing local pharmacists together with their MPs to discuss pharmacy issues. Our priority files have included highlighting the role of pharmacists in COVID-19 vaccine administration and rapid test distribution to small and medium-size businesses, advocating for federal funding to support the pharmacy workforce, and making exemptions to the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* (CDSA) permanent.

PAM celebrations continue: How you can participate

We're now in week 3 of [Pharmacy Appreciation Month](#) (PAM) in Canada—the annual national campaign that shines a spotlight on all things pharmacy and celebrates the extraordinary efforts and contributions of pharmacy professionals to Canada's health-care system. Here's an overview of how CPhA has been celebrating:

- **31 Days of Pharmacy** – In one of our most popular promotions, CPhA has been shining a light on one of the many amazing pharmacy professionals and pharmacy teams each day on social media. [Email us](#) a picture of yourself or your pharmacy team in action, with the name and location (city and province/territory) of your pharmacy and the full names of any team members in the photo.
- **The Great #PAM2022Playlist** – We're calling on the pharmacy community to help curate the ultimate soundtrack to PAM. [Send us your favourite songs](#) to go with the themes we've suggested. [Check out the songs](#) that have already been sent in.
- **#MyFavePharm Patient Contest** – We're asking patients to tell us why they love their pharmacy team by filling out a [nomination form](#) for a chance to win a tablet for themselves and their favourite pharmacy team member. So far, we've received over 350 submissions from across the country.

For more information on how you can get involved, check out our [communications toolkit](#) and join the conversation on social media using the hashtags #PAM2022 and #ThankYouPharmacy.

Pharmacists on the front line

Trail, BC, pharmacist reflects on the impact of COVID-19

For Linda Seib, the best part of being a pharmacist in her hometown of Trail, British Columbia, is that she can use her pharmaceutical knowledge daily to serve the community in which she grew up and later raised her family. Over the past few years in particular, pharmacy professionals have taken on a huge part in helping the country through the pandemic. There's been so many changes, such as being at-the-ready for trusted COVID-19 information, supplying infection-control goods, and tacking on new services such as COVID-19 vaccine administration. All this in addition to the usual busy days of filling and advising a multitude of clients on their prescriptions, administering other vaccines, and much more. "The greatest change I have experienced as a pharmacist over the past year is a greater need for the services all pharmacists can provide—

medication information and review, prescription renewal when appropriate, minor ailment assessment, and [over]-the-counter treatment recommendations and injection services,” Seib [told the Trail Times](#).

Provincial

AHS proposes steep wage rollbacks for health-care workers, including pharmacy professionals

Alberta Health Services is proposing up to 10% in wage reductions for some health-care professionals including pharmacy technicians, pharmacists, respiratory therapists and social workers in early contract negotiations with the union that represents them, [according to CTV](#). An email to members from Health Sciences Association of Alberta (HSAA) outlines AHS’ opening proposal, including wage rollbacks ranging from 0.28% to 10.93% for around 57% of members depending on the profession. This includes 10.93% for pharmacy technicians and 5.10% for pharmacists. HSAA says it recognizes this is early in negotiations, but says it rejected the proposal outright.

Pharmacies, the pandemic and their place in health care

Allison Bodnar, the CEO of the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia (PANS), [spoke to SaltWire](#) about pharmacy innovations brought to the health-care system in Nova Scotia and how pharmacy is looking ahead to other ways it can become more of a front-line partner moving forward.

National

London Drugs defends vaccine mandate in pharmacist wrongful dismissal suit

London Drugs has filed court documents defending itself against a lawsuit by a former employee claiming that she was wrongfully dismissed for refusing to get a COVID-19 vaccination, [the Vancouver Sun reports](#). Lina Reid, who worked as a staff pharmacist for 16 years, said in her lawsuit that she was told in August that her employer was introducing a policy requiring all employees to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19. On November 1, after refusing to be vaccinated, she was placed on unpaid leave, according to her lawsuit filed in the BC Supreme Court. Reid argued that there was no agreement or term of employment that allowed the vaccine mandate to be imposed and that by putting her on unpaid leave, the company had, in effect, wrongfully dismissed her. But in its response to the lawsuit, London Drugs said the regular duties for Reid, who it said resigned from her job in December, required her to be in close proximity to other employees and to the public. “She was required to give vaccinations to members of the public and to provide health-related information, which may include information regarding COVID-19,” the response said. “Had the plaintiff remained employed by the defendant, she would have been required to administer COVID-19 booster shots to members of the public.” London Drugs said the purpose of the vaccine policy for its employees is to reflect the store’s status as a health-care provider for essential goods and services and to create a safe

environment for employees and customers.

Loblaw to acquire Lifemark Health Group to expand SDM health-care services

Loblaw [announced](#) that Shoppers Drug Mart (SDM) has agreed to acquire Lifemark Health Group—the leading provider of outpatient physiotherapy, massage therapy, occupational therapy, and chiropractic, mental health, and other ancillary rehabilitation services through its more than 300 clinics across Canada. “For the past 60 years, Shoppers Drug Mart has played an important role in the health and wellness of Canadians, providing convenient, seamless access to pharmacy and health-care services in communities nationwide,” said Jeff Leger, the president of SDM. “For Canadians who want to get well and stay well, pharmacy and physical therapy services go hand in hand. Shoppers and Lifemark together make the continuum of care easier for patients.”

NACI outlines guidelines for Medicago’s Canada-made COVID-19 vaccine. Here’s what’s new

Canadians who have been unable or unwilling to receive an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine now have the option to take the Medicago Covifenz vaccine after it was first approved for use in February, [according to Global News](#). Following the authorization, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) issued a guidance on March 11 to provinces and territories on the use of the Medicago Covifenz vaccine, the first COVID-19 vaccine to be developed by a Canada-based company. Medicago is also the first plant-based virus-like particle vaccine in the country. “While mRNA vaccines are strongly recommended, Medicago is another option that provinces and territories may offer to people 18–64 years of age,” NACI said in a tweet.

Canada no longer at COVID-19’s mercy, but new variants could arise: experts

As the COVID-19 pandemic stretches into a third year, many experts are expressing cautious optimism that Canada has passed the need for lockdowns and the widespread safety protocols that marked much of the last 24 months, [Global News reports](#). But after 2 years of dealing with an unpredictable virus, they also say we should be ready to adapt at any moment. Raywat Deonandan, an epidemiologist with the University of Ottawa, is buoyed by how current vaccines have offered exceptional protection against severe disease even as the virus has changed—at least up to its current form. “This is no longer a crisis of the virus having us at its mercy,” Deonandan said. “We have the tools to live a normal life . . . but it’s a matter of spending the right money and having the political will to enact those tools accordingly.” Deonandan said new variants will arise “absolutely” as transmission continues in the developing world where vaccines are scarce. “Will those variants be troubling? We don’t know,” he added. “But we have vaccine platforms that can produce new formulations very, very quickly.”

International

US: APhA convenes Community Pharmacy Workplace Summit to address drivers impacting workplace and well-being

The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified workplace and well-being issues among pharmacy management, pharmacy team members and other stakeholders, which the American Pharmacists Association (APhA) is committed to addressing, [according to a statement](#). A first step in the process was the APhA Community Pharmacy Workplace Summit, held in late February 2022, which brought together 46 diverse pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, employers, stakeholders and organizations representing more than 30 000 community pharmacy practice sites. The stakeholders identified practical approaches to improve the community-based pharmacy workplace, practitioner well-being, and patient care expectations as well as to address challenges in meeting health-care needs. “There is no magic wand to quickly fix all the root causes. We must maintain our focus on supporting a resilient and productive workforce in community pharmacies that meets patient care needs and operates under a sustainable business model, without stress and burnout in the workplace,” said Scott J. Knoer, the executive vice president and CEO of APhA. “Pharmacy team members want to safely take care of patients with a work-life balance and—most of all—feel appreciated.”

US: APhA stands in solidarity with pharmacy teams serving the health-care needs of Ukrainian citizens

APhA stands in solidarity with both its Ukrainian pharmacy colleagues and those neighbouring countries who are entrenched in serving the health-care and humanitarian needs of Ukrainian citizens thrust into the current strife. “Pharmacists worldwide are focused on meeting their ethical responsibilities to the individual patient and community at large in a caring and compassionate manner,” the association said [in a statement](#). “The pharmacy and health care teams serving Ukrainian citizens are fulfilling this responsibility, and sometimes risking theirs [sic] and their family’s safety to do so. Our thoughts and prayers go to Ukrainian citizens and the teams addressing their health care needs.” Working with the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) and its international colleagues, APhA has also provided financial support to address humanitarian and health-care needs for Ukrainian citizens.

US: Pharmacists say Biden’s major new COVID-19 initiative won’t work

Major pharmacist groups argue that the Biden administration’s new “Test to Treat” initiative to facilitate access to COVID-19 antivirals will have a limited impact and fail to mitigate certain health inequities, because pharmacists are restricted from prescribing the pills, [the Guardian reports](#). The program, which the administration aims to provide for free, is also slated to roll out in Veterans Affairs clinics, community health centres and long-term care facilities. Major participants include some 250 Walgreens stores, 225 Kroger Little Clinics and 1200 CVS MinuteClinics. CVS clinics are staffed by nurse practitioners and physician assistants, authorized by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to prescribe the 2 currently available COVID-19 antivirals—Pfizer’s Paxlovid and Merck and Ridgeback Biotherapeutics’ molnupiravir. In a March 9 letter to President Biden calling for pharmacists to be granted authority to prescribe these pills, 14 organizations representing pharmacies and pharmacists insisted Test to Treat’s impact will be compromised by the fact that such in-house clinics are relatively limited in number and largely in urban areas. “Unfortunately, rural and underserved communities are less likely to benefit from your test to treat approach because of this limitation,” the letter stated.

Drugmakers look to help Ukrainians in drug trials after Russian invasion

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has left drugmakers scrambling to find ways for patients enrolled in clinical trials there to receive their medicines, as millions seek shelter from bombardment and flee to neighbouring countries, [Reuters reports](#). Ukraine and Russia have become important countries for studying new drugs because patients there have a dire need for medicines to treat cancer and neurological and gastrointestinal disorders. Russia and surrounding countries account for 10% of people in clinical trials, analysts estimate. Two of the pharmaceutical companies with the most clinical trials in Ukraine—US-based Merck & Co. and Swiss drugmaker Roche—say they are assessing how to continue delivering medicines to patients. Combined, the companies have about 100 clinical trials underway there. At least 7 companies, including Pfizer, have said they are experiencing disruptions to trials or patient enrollment in the region. The full scope of delays in Ukraine is unknown.

In Depth

Indigenous pharmacist Jaris Swidrovich on better educating pharmacists

Jaris Swidrovich is the first Indigenous faculty pharmacist in Canada. Swidrovich, who is from Yellow Quill First Nation, is a Saulteaux First Nation, Ukrainian and two-spirit person. He spoke with [Canadian Healthcare Network](#) (subscriber access) about why pharmacy needs to change to better serve Indigenous peoples, how he's working to make that happen and why Instagram is helping.

Worth Repeating

“We expect a lot from our children, to adjust to school, no school, socialization, no socialization, masks, the mask debate, and now we add the Russian-Ukraine war and there's a whole lot of stress.” —Wendy Carrothers, the front of store manager at Powassan Drug Mart in Powassan, Ontario. Inspired by the staff's love of all things Harry Potter, the pharmacy owners [decorated the store](#) as part of “Harry Potter Week” to bring some magic to the kids in the community.

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.

