



Canadian  
Pharmacists  
Association

Association des  
pharmaciens  
du Canada

# The Weekly

Bringing the world of pharmacy together

## May 17, 2023

### CPhA

#### ***CPhA appears before Senate Committee to discuss regulations of natural health products***

On May 11, CPhA's acting Chief Pharmacist Officer, Dr. Barry Power, [appeared](#) before the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology to discuss CPhA's support for natural health products' regulations through the expansion of Vanessa's Law. The meeting was in response to a proposal in the 2023 federal budget to amend the *Food and Drugs Act* to extend powers in the *Protecting Canadians from Unsafe Drugs Act* (also known as Vanessa's Law) to natural health products. CPhA is a strong supporter of Vanessa's Law, and when it was introduced in 2014, we expressed concern that natural health products were excluded from the bill.

#### ***IPPC Indigenous Pharmacy Scholarship: Deadline June 15***

The deadline to apply for the Indigenous Pharmacy Professionals of Canada's Indigenous Pharmacy Scholarship has been extended to June 15. With both PharmD and technician scholarships available for the 2023/2024 academic year, this funding will help reduce financial barriers for Indigenous students interested in pursuing a career in pharmacy. Thank you to our founding

sponsors, Johnson & Johnson, Shoppers Drug Mart, Green Shield Canada and Sobeys National Pharmacy Group, for their generous support of the IPPC Indigenous Pharmacy Scholarship. [Apply now](#).

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## Pharmacy on the front lines

### ***Alberta pharmacy scrambles to get supplies amid influx of wildlife evacuees***

Amid wildfires raging in Alberta, Lawrence Hahn, who owns a pharmacy in High Level, [spoke to CBC](#) about how he's trying to help as fire evacuees descend on the northern Alberta town. From medications to mobility aids to baby formula, the Pharmasave team in High Level is working hard to get supplies for wildfire evacuees and emphasizing the vital role pharmacists play during disasters and emergencies to help their patients and those displaced from their homes or communities.

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## Provincial

### ***NB Medicare now pays for pharmacists to assess, prescribe for 7 more ailments***

New Brunswick Medicare now covers more services provided by pharmacists, in a bid to improve access to primary care, [CBC reports](#). The provincial government made the announcement on May 15, adding 7 additional illnesses and conditions that patients can visit a participating pharmacy for, including contact allergic dermatitis, cold sores, mild to moderate eczema, gastroesophageal reflux disease, impetigo, Lyme disease prevention after a high-risk tick bite and mild acne. Health Minister Bruce Fitch says there are about 80 000 visits to physicians each year for these minor ailments, and additional ailments will likely to be added in the future. Andrew Drover, president of the New Brunswick Pharmacists' Association, said pharmacists have been able to assess and treat 34 conditions since 2014, but with the service for some of these now being publicly funded, it should help divert thousands of patients from emergency rooms and clinics.

## **Quebec pharmacies no longer offering free COVID-19 test kits**

As of May 15, anyone not included in one of the high-risk categories can still get a rapid test kit at the pharmacy, but will have to pay for it, [reports the Montreal Gazette](#). The Quebec government announced in March that free distribution in pharmacies of the boxes containing 5 rapid tests will be available only to high-risk groups. Test kits are still available for free in schools and daycares until March 31, 2024. The Association québécoise des pharmaciens propriétaires (AQPP), which represents more than 2000 owner pharmacists and 1900 pharmacies in Quebec, says pharmacies in the province have distributed nearly 9.25 million boxes of rapid tests since they became available in December 2021. “I hope that this success will be the example to follow for other programs of this type, in particular to make screening tests accessible in pharmacies,” AQPP president Benoit Morin said in a press release.

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## **National**

### ***Health Canada issues advisory about shortage of nitroglycerin tablets***

Health Canada [issued an updated advisory](#) stating that, in addition to an ongoing shortage of nitroglycerin spray, the tablets are now in short supply, too. Canada is experiencing a shortage of nitroglycerin tablets due to an increase in demand caused by the nitroglycerin spray shortage. Nitroglycerin tablets are placed under the tongue and are used to treat pain during episodes of angina (chest pain) in people who have coronary artery disease (narrowing of the blood vessels that supply blood to the heart). Together with its partners, Health Canada is looking at ways to conserve existing supply, expedite resupplies to hospitals and pharmacies, and access foreign-authorized supply or alternatives, where possible. CPhA continues to participate in stakeholder meetings and update its [resources and information for pharmacists](#).

### ***Don't buy abortion or morning-after pills from this website, Health Canada warns***

Health Canada has [issued a warning](#) to consumers about purchasing unauthorized abortion and morning-after pills sold from the website “Dr. Pooja,” [reports Global News](#). Canadians should not buy any of these unauthorized

health products from the website, Health Canada stated, as they have not been assessed for safety, efficacy and quality and may pose a range of serious health risks. They have directed the Dr. Pooja website to stop selling unauthorized health products. The advisory cautions that those who have taken unauthorized products labelled to contain mifepristone and misoprostol to “seek immediate medical attention” and to speak with their health-care provider if they’ve taken unauthorized emergency contraceptives labelled to contain levonorgestrel.

### ***Opioid crisis: Fiery debate erupts in House of Commons over Liberal’s safe supply policy***

During Tuesday’s question period, Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre sharply criticized the Liberal’s safe supply policy intended to address the opioid crisis, saying his political opponents have “no common sense,” [reports Global News](#). In a passionate retort, Canada’s Mental Health and Addictions Minister Carolyn Bennett told Poilievre that her party’s safe supply technique is backed by science and saves lives, so people could be alive long enough to seek help for their addiction.

### ***New cancer diagnoses dropped sharply in 2020 in Canada amid health-care turmoil: StatCan***

There were more than 140 000 new cancer cases diagnosed in Canada during the first year of the pandemic, but a sharp drop in rates among the most common cancers suggests that many cases may have gone undiagnosed, [CTV News reports](#). After adjusting for age and population changes, the incidence rate was 449.5 new cancer cases per 100 000, which is more than 12% lower than the average annual rate of incidence between 2015 and 2019. Even 3 years later, around 1 in 4 cancer patients are still experiencing cancelled or postponed appointments.

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## **International**

### ***WHO declares end to mpox public health emergency***

The World Health Organization (WHO) said on May 11 it was ending a 10-month-long global health emergency for mpox, a viral disease that led to confirmed cases in more than 100 countries, [Reuters reports](#). The organization declared mpox a public health emergency of international concern in July 2022 and backed its stand in November 2022 and February 2023. The WHO's director-general, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, declared the end of the emergency status for the disease based on the recommendation of the organization's emergency committee. Almost 90% fewer mpox cases were reported in the past 3 months, compared with cases in the same duration before that, the WHO chief said.

### ***Abortion pill case moves to appeals court, on track for Supreme Court***

Legal arguments over access the abortion pill move to a federal appeals court in New Orleans this week, in a case challenging a Food and Drug Administration decision made more than 2 decades ago, [the Associated Press reports](#). The closely watched case is likely to wind up at the Supreme Court, which already has intervened to keep the drug, mifepristone, available while the legal fight winds through the courts. Three 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals judges with a history of supporting abortion restrictions are set to hear arguments. At issue are the FDA's initial approval of mifepristone in 2000, and FDA actions making the drug more accessible in later years. Judges nominated to the district court and appeals court by former President Donald Trump are playing major roles in the case, which is being argued almost a year after the Supreme Court overturned the *Roe v. Wade* ruling that had established abortion rights. Fourteen states have since banned abortion at all stages of pregnancy and other states have adopted, or are debating, major restrictions.

### ***White House wants to improve access to opioid overdose reversal medication***

President Joe Biden's administration is seeking to meet with the makers of the life-saving medication naloxone used to reverse opioid overdoses, in an effort to increase access and reduce cost, [Reuters reports](#). The planned meeting is part of the administration's efforts to ensure naloxone is both accessible and affordable to everyone who may need it. US health regulators approved an over-the-counter version of Emergent BioSolutions Inc.'s Narcan earlier this year aimed at making it easier to access without a prescription. The Food and

Drug Administration approved the first generic version of the medication in 2021.

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## In Depth

### ***Users of opioid-dispensing machines overdosed less, reported improved health***

Nearly every participant in a study of a Vancouver safer supply program involving opioid-dispensing machines continued to use illicit drugs—but they used less, they experienced fewer overdoses and they reported improvements in health and well-being, [reports the Globe and Mail](#). The findings of the first formal evaluation of the mySafe program, published May 15 in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* (CMAJ), present a complex picture of one of the most hotly debated responses to Canada’s toxic drug crisis. Authors of the qualitative study say it captures both benefits and drawbacks to the novel intervention and offers new considerations on barriers to accessing drug therapies more broadly.

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## Worth Repeating

“Today’s announcement means thousands of patients will be diverted from emergency departments, doctors’ offices and clinics. Expanding the role of pharmacies is a prescription for relief in our health-care system.” –Andrew Drover, president of the New Brunswick Pharmacists’ Association, in relation to this week’s [announcement](#) to expand public funding for more pharmacist care in the province.

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This weekly update is compiled by the Canadian Pharmacists Association. While we aim to ensure all information contained in this update is accurate, CPhA does not take responsibility for the content provided by other organizations and sources.