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Subject: The Weekly: CPhA’s Pharmacy News Update for July 20

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Canadian
Pharmacists
Association Association des
pharmaciens
du Canada

The Weekly

Bringing the world of pharmacy together

July 20, 2022

CPhA

Updated Resource Round-Up: Childhood vaccination

Whether you are administering vaccines in your pharmacy or helping parents and kids understand the benefits of getting vaccinated, there’s lots of information to wade through. Our [updated round-up](#) of helpful resources includes a [Caregiver Checklist](#)—produced in collaboration with Children’s Healthcare Canada, Solutions for Kids in Pain (SKIP) and medSask—to help make the experience easier for the child, parent and immunizer.

Baby formula shortage: Resources for pharmacy professionals

CPhA continues to participate in weekly Health Canada working group discussions related to the ongoing hypoallergenic infant formula shortage. While production resumed in early July at the Abbott manufacturing facility in Michigan, Health Canada continues to work with manufacturers to make sure that supply is maintained until the situation stabilizes. The shortage has become highly distressing for certain families, and they are turning to pharmacists to find supply. Pharmacists should be prepared to answer questions and know how to access hypoallergenic formula so that parents are

not turned away. CPhA continues to update its [resource web page](#) with information and resources to help support pharmacy professionals during the shortage. Recent updates include an updated [list of distributors](#) and an updated [resource document](#) with estimated timing of upcoming formula shipments, UPC and other product information.

Pharmacy on the front lines

‘Recipe for disaster’: Pharmacist warns of drug shortages on Vancouver Island

A South Island pharmacist is warning residents that drug shortages could unexpectedly occur at their local pharmacies, [according to CTV](#). Yoshi Ito, a pharmacist at the Peoples Pharmacy in Colwood, BC, says a range of medications can be struck with shortages with little warning, especially cold, flu and allergy medication during the summer. “I’d say up to 10% of our shelves go in and out of shortages without warning,” Ito said. “We don’t know when it’s coming back. [Distributors] don’t give us a warning nor a timeline of how long [the shortage] is . . . So we’re scrambling to find substitutes, changing to a different class of medication altogether, and we have to contact a doctor for that, and that’s a problem itself.” Ito urges people who have prescriptions to make sure they have a stock of a least a month or 2 in case an unexpected shortage occurs. He also encourages other pharmacists to warn their customers of potential supply disruptions.

Provincial

\$175M pharmaceutical distribution centre opens in Edmonton

One of the largest pharmaceutical distribution centres in Western Canada is now open in Edmonton, [CTV reports](#). McKesson Canada’s state-of-the-art facility in northwest Edmonton will employ 150 people full time. The company distributes to pharmacies and hospitals throughout Canada. Building the facility provided 1800 construction jobs at the height of the pandemic.

‘Radio silence’ of QC government over negotiations deplorable: AQPP

The Association québécoise des pharmaciens propriétaires (AQPP) says the government’s “radio silence” since it tabled its last offer on June 30 is deplorable, [Radio-Canada reports](#) (original article in French). The situation has reached an e where the group is “determining next steps and considering all option cording to a memo sent t members. “There is disappointment and I would are questioning the types of serv ces pharmacist-owneesable to offer over the next months and years,” said AQPP presi

ent Benin. Brought in by the government to help administer COVID-19 vaccines tribute rapid tests, pharmacists want to be recognized for their role. The ties also do not agree on the increase in dispensing fees. “These fees aused to pay our salaries, but to pay all the expenses of the pharmacy,” Morin added. He explained the cost of supplies has increased by 12%, while the costs of delivery, gas, electricity and rent have also jumped due to inflation. The labour shortage is also forcing pharmacist-owners to offer better salaries to their employees in order to retain staff. Since pharmacists provide essential services, they do not have the right to call a strike. However, individually and independently, a pharmacist-owner could decide to reduce their opening hours or no longer offer certain services if they do not have sufficient income to make the pharmacy profitable.

Pharmacies to play big role in booster expansion

With the closure of public health clinics, roughly 188 New Brunswick pharmacies are picking up the slack and playing a big role in administering COVID-19 vaccines, [radio station Country 94.1 reports](#). This comes as provincial officials expand the eligibility for second booster shots to individuals aged 18 and older. Jake Reid, the executive director of the New Brunswick Pharmacists’ Association (NBPhA), said at the beginning of the vaccine rollout that public health held mass clinics and pharmacies were doing the other half. But with government clinics now closed, most vaccinations will take place in pharmacies. “At the peak, there were about 200 pharmacies that participated [in the vaccination campaign] and we’re down a little bit from that now,” he said. Not every pharmacy can offer the shot for several reasons, such as pharmacy location or some pharmacists not being trained to administer vaccines, but Reid said at least 1 will offer doses in every community across the province.

Pharmacies dealing with surging demand for COVID-19 shots

A surge in demand for COVID-19 boosters is presenting challenges for PEI’s vaccination clinics and pharmacies, [according to CBC](#). A fourth shot has been available to Islanders 12 and older for 2 weeks, and appointments at Health PEI clinics and pharmacies are filling up fast. Like many other workplaces, pharmacies are seeing a lot of people out with COVID-19, which is limiting how many vaccine appointments can be opened up, said Erin MacKenzie, the executive director of the Prince Edward Island Pharmacists Association. “We’re really trying to make sure we are meeting the demand. And I think over the coming weeks, more appointments will open up now that we know there’s increased demand. Pharmacies are trying to do that, as much as staffing levels will allow.”

Health Canada approves Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine as first for youngest kids

Canada's drug regulator approved Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine for infants and preschoolers on July 14, making it the first vaccine approved for that age group in the country, [the Canadian Press reports](#). Health Canada now says the Moderna vaccine can be given to young children between the ages of 6 months and 5 years in doses one-quarter the size of that approved for adults. "After a thorough and independent scientific review of the evidence, the department has determined that the vaccine is safe and effective at preventing COVID-19 in children between 6 months and 5 years of age," the department said in a statement. "This authorization comes at a critical time in the pandemic as we progress through the seventh wave, and though children are less likely to experience complications from COVID-19, they can still get very sick," Dr. Supriya Sharma, Health Canada's chief medical adviser, said at a media briefing.

GSK welcomes agreement with federal government for the provision of pandemic and seasonal flu vaccines

On July 15, GSK [announced](#) agreement with the Government of Canada for pandemic and seasonal influenza vaccines to help protect Canadian adults and children. The 4-year agreement spanning through March 2026, includes the supply of as many as 80 million doses of Arepanrix (adjuvanted pandemic influenza vaccine) in the event of a pandemic and a minimum of 4 million doses per year of Flulenza (seasonal influenza vaccine). Both vaccines will be supplied by GSK's Ste-Foy, Quebec, facility. This agreement follows earlier agreements with the Government of Canada and GSK to supply both pandemic and seasonal influenza vaccines dating back to 2001. "We are proud to continue to work with the Government of Canada to supply our vaccines, supporting Canada's pandemic preparedness and fight against seasonal influenza," said Roger Connor, GSK's president of vaccines and global health. "COVID-19 has shown the world the importance of immunization and pandemic preparedness. This agreement reserves future production and delivery of pandemic and seasonal influenza vaccines allowing for a rapid response to help protect Canadians."

International

US: Pharmacists who refuse to fill scripts for pills that can induce abortion risk violating federal civil rights laws

The Biden administration warned the nation's 60,000 community pharmacies that they risk violating federal civil rights laws if they refuse to fill prescriptions for pills that can induce abortion—the second time that it has used its executive authority to set up showdowns with states where abortion is now illegal, [according to the New York](#)

[*Times*](#). In 4 pages of guidance, the US Department of Health and Human Services listed a series of conditions—including miscarriage, stomach ulcers and ectopic pregnancy—commonly treated with drugs that can induce abortion. It warned that failing to dispense such pills “may be discriminating” on the basis of sex or disability. Douglas Hoey, the CEO of the National Community Pharmacists Association, said [in a statement](#) that “states have provided very little clarity on how pharmacists should proceed in light of conflicting state and federal laws and regulations . . . It is highly unfair for state and federal governments to threaten aggressive action against pharmacists who are just trying to serve their patients within new legal boundaries that are still taking shape,” he said.

US: Pharmacies and providers grapple with fallout of Roe v Wade over arthritis drug

Confusion over prescribing a common arthritis drug is prompting demands for state guidance as pharmacies and providers grapple with the fallout of the US Supreme Court abortion ruling, [Bloomberg News reports](#). Patient reports of delays or roadblocks in accessing methotrexate have risen on social media since the ruling triggered abortion bans in 22 states. Methotrexate is approved to treat joint inflammation and improve mobility among patients with inflammatory arthritis, lupus, psoriasis and other conditions. But some states consider it an abortion-inducing drug, both because of its risks of miscarriage in pregnant individuals and use in gynecology to treat ectopic pregnancies.

US: AIDS Foundation files lawsuit against Express Scripts over ‘star ratings’ system

The AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF), a non-profit that provides health-care services and runs pharmacies, [filed a lawsuit](#) accusing Express Scripts, the pharmacy benefits manager, of manipulating the Medicare “Star Ratings” system that is used to score insurance plans. In doing so, the company gives unfairly low “performance” scores to participating pharmacies and, as a result, then “claws back” Medicare benefits from pharmacies—often months and years after the fact. AHF alleged that Express Scripts books larger profits at the expense of HIV/AIDS and other patients served by AHF and other independent and mom-and-pop pharmacies.

Australia: Funding secured for dedicated aged care pharmacists

The Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) has secured new funding to embed pharmacists in Residential Aged Care Facilities (RACFs), [according to Australian Pharmacist](#). The AU\$345.7 million (CAD\$306.6 million) ment will not only revolutionize the way pharmacists care for Austrælderly, but will also provide them with a exciting new career path sider, creating up to 1500 pharmacist opportunities with staged uptake4 years. “The current system is not delivering its full impact, and new ach es are needed to improve medicine use in aged care,” said Chris Freeman, PSA’s

national president. He added that pharmacists are the key to improving the safety of older Australians. “PSA has been advocating for funding to improve medicine safety in RACFs since 2018, following the establishment of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety—and now, almost 4 years later, we are finally seeing action. As the custodians and experts of medication safety, enabling pharmacists to spend more time on site in aged care is the obvious solution to address the longstanding issues of polypharmacy and chemical restraint in aged care facilities.”

Australia: Decision on children’s vaccination welcomed, but national uniformity needed

The decision by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) to provisionally approve the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine for use in children from 6 months to 5 years of age has been [welcomed](#) by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia (PGA). Nick Panayiaris, the acting national president of PGA, said the TGA decision was good news for patients and families of the demonstrated safety and effectiveness of the vaccine. Panayiaris said pharmacists now await the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation recommendation to administer the vaccine under the new TGA guidelines. “If that recommendation comes through, it is critical that all the states and territories look to amend their regulations to enable pharmacists to administer the vaccine to children within this age group,” he said. “We need to act cohesively and swiftly to protect the children in this age group, particularly as we are seeing a significant surge in COVID-19 cases across Australia. The Guild urges all jurisdictions to act uniformly as a matter of priority so that the approvals for pharmacists to administer the vaccine to children in this age group are consistent across Australia. State and territories acting to enable pharmacists to administer the vaccine will ensure it reaches as many individuals in this cohort of patients as possible,” he added.

About 25 million children worldwide missed routine vaccinations due to COVID-19: UN

About 25 million children worldwide have missed out on routine immunizations against common diseases like diphtheria, largely because the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted regular health services or triggered misinformation about vaccines, [according to the Associated Press](#). In a report published on July 15, the World Health Organization and UNICEF said its figures show 25 million children last year failed to get vaccinated against diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis—a marker for childhood immunization coverage—continuing a downward trend that began in 2019. “This is a red alert for child health,” said Catherine Russell, UNICEF’s executive director. “We are witnessing the largest sustained drop in childhood immunization in a generation,” she said, adding that the consequences would be measured in lives lost.

In Depth

Pharmacists are in limbo under Texas abortion laws

Fear of civil lawsuits, and even criminal prosecution, is causing Texas pharmacists to pause as they dispense medications that have the potential to induce abortion, including misoprostol, mifepristone and methotrexate. Some pharmacies are requiring additional verification of medication use, while others have put blanket pauses on certain prescriptions. The new reality could deteriorate the relationship between patients and pharmacists, who are some of the most accessible health-care providers in the United States. The *Dallas Morning News* [looks at](#) the dilemma facing pharmacists.

With monkeypox spreading globally, many experts believe the virus can’t be contained

It has been a mere 9 weeks since the UK announced it had detected 4 cases of monkeypox—a virus endemic only in West and Central Africa. In that time, the number of cases has mushroomed to nearly 13 000 in over 60 countries throughout Europe, North and South America, the Middle East, South Asia, Australia, and new parts of Africa. The growth in cases and the geographic spread has been rapid and relentless. Now, even as global health officials race to curb the spread of the virus, most experts [polled by STAT](#) said they don’t believe it will be possible to contain it.

Worth Repeating

“Fix the system. We can worry about how we split the cheque later.” —the *Globe and Mail*’s health columnist André Picard [on how squabbling over the federal-provincial split in health-care funding](#) won’t repair the health system

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.

