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Canadian  
Pharmacists  
Association

Association des  
pharmaciens  
du Canada

# The Weekly

Bringing the world of pharmacy together

## June 21, 2023

The Weekly is taking a break and will return on July 5, 2023.

### CPhA

#### ***Federal drug shortage roundtable discusses solutions***

CPhA participated in a drug shortage roundtable discussion with the federal Health Minister on June 16 to discuss solutions to address drug supply chain issues, where we highlighted the importance of strengthened communications between stakeholders, the need to improve transparency and the need to build an economically stronger drug ecosystem. The meeting was part of the Health Products Supply Chain Advisory Committee—a group comprised of CPhA and other stakeholders involved in the drug supply chain. The committee's objective is to identify challenges and long-term solutions to strengthen Canada's health product supply chain, with an immediate focus on prescription and non-prescription medications and medical devices.

#### ***Public Service Health Care Plan changes coming July 1: Information for pharmacists***

On July 1, 2023, the Public Service Health Care Plan (PSHCP) will transition to Canada Life. Over the past several months, CPhA has been advocating to

reverse changes to the PSHCP switch as related to dispensing fee caps and frequency limits. The changes are a result of negotiations between the federal government and 17 unions and as such are unlikely to change in the immediate future. Some of the changes will impact pharmacies and may generate questions by plan members at the pharmacy counter. To help you explain the upcoming changes to your patients, check out our [resource](#) for some potential speaking points.

### ***Pride Month: Resources to help you provide safe and inclusive care***

Happy Pride Month! Let's stand together with the 2SLGBTQ+ community every day by providing accessible, gender-affirming and inclusive pharmacy care. Check out our [Resource Round-up](#) for some resources and practice tools to help, including a [new video](#) from Dalhousie University pharmacy professor Kyle Wilby and pharmacy student Samuel Villemure on practical strategies to improve 2SLGBTQ+ pharmacy care. This month, we also caught up with several pharmacists to talk about how pharmacy professionals can provide and advocate for more inclusive care for the 2SLGBTQ+ community. Meet [Greg Richard](#), [Alex Tang](#), [Tristan Lai](#), [Alex Hosein](#) and [Rheya White](#).

### ***Celebrating National Indigenous Peoples Day and NIHM***

Today, June 21, is National Indigenous Peoples Day. The month of June is also [National Indigenous History Month](#) (NIHM)—a time to learn about and celebrate the rich history, cultures and contributions of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples, while also recognizing the ongoing trauma and harm experienced by Indigenous Peoples and building a path toward reconciliation. Here's an overview of how CPhA and the Indigenous Pharmacy Professionals of Canada (IPPC) are marking the month:

- **IPPC: A year in review** – Hear from CEO Amy Lamb about the [highlights from IPPC's first year](#) and what's next.
- **Pharmacy Check-Ins** – We recently caught up with several Indigenous pharmacy professionals to talk about pharmacy practice and providing safe, inclusive health care to Indigenous communities. Meet [Fanny Fiddler](#), [Kalbie Hokanson](#), [Cassandra McLelland](#), [Sasha Merasty](#) and [Jaris Swidrovich](#).

- **Orange shirts for pharmacy professionals** – [Pre-order an “Every Child Matters” shirt](#) designed specifically for pharmacy professionals by July 1 to receive it by September.
- **Updated resource round-up** – Our [Indigenous Health Resource Round-up](#) has been updated with information and resources to help you provide accessible and inclusive care to Indigenous patients.

For more information about NIHM and how you can get involved, check out our [webpage](#) and follow IPPC on social media.

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## Pharmacy on the front lines

### ***Second pharmacist-led clinic opens in Lethbridge, AB***

Hoping to ease pressure on the health-care system, the Shoppers Drug Mart (SDM) in north Lethbridge opened a pharmacist-led care clinic on June 16. The newly minted site is building off the success of a similar clinic that opened in south Lethbridge in June 2022. Pharmacist and associate owner Hyder Mohamed [told Global News](#) he’s hearing about the need first-hand. “We have been basically asked by our customers and patients why the north side doesn’t have a better setup when it comes to clinics,” he said. Now patients can visit Mohamed’s location for medical services, including ordering labs and testing, minor illness and injury, and women’s health. According to Qadir Mawji, director of clinic development with SDM, Lethbridge’s first pharmacist-led clinic has seen about 40 patients per day since opening last year. Most of the concerns are minor ailments like care for urinary tract infections, minor skin conditions, eye infections and chronic disease management. “There is a huge need here to take the burden off the health-care system, and pharmacists are well-equipped with an advanced scope of practice here in Alberta to help support all the other health-care professionals,” Mawji said.

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## Provincial

### ***Saskatchewan expands scope of practice for pharmacists***

Pharmacists in Saskatchewan will soon take on new roles in patient care as the provincial government expands the scope of their practice, [the Saskatoon StarPhoenix reports](#). On June 16, the government announced changes that are expected to come into effect over the course of the next year. Pharmacists will be able to independently prescribe medication, order lab tests and conduct point-of-care testing, such as drawing a small blood sample. Health Minister Paul Merriman said the changes will help alleviate pressure on Saskatchewan's health-care system, particularly in rural regions with fewer doctors. Amy Wiebe, president of the Saskatchewan College of Pharmacy Professionals Council, said some of the changes have been a long time coming. "Many, many years ago, pharmacists were really just involved in dispensing medication," Wiebe said. "But over time, pharmacists became more trained . . . and our system is in a position where we need everybody to join in and be working to their fullest scope."

### ***BC sales of Ozempic to US residents plummet by 99% after provincial restrictions***

The amount of Ozempic being sold to US residents from pharmacies in BC has fallen dramatically since restrictions came into effect this spring, [CBC reports](#). A statement from the province on June 16 said sales of the diabetes drug have plummeted by more than 99% since the province stopped allowing American residents to order it online from BC on April 19. From April 20 to May 31, pharmacies in BC filled 111 Ozempic prescriptions to people with addresses in the US. By comparison, the province said 30 700 Ozempic prescriptions were filled in BC between January 1 and April 19. Ozempic is a drug largely intended for people with type 2 diabetes. The medication became popular in recent months, with celebrities and online influencers promoting its ability to help with weight loss, even though it's not approved for that purpose. The province said there is no shortage of Ozempic in BC or in Canada, but sales were restricted to prevent that scenario.

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## **National**

### ***Experts release 13-step roadmap to reform Canada's health-care system***

On June 15, the CD Howe Institute released a 13-step plan to reform Canada's health-care system, reflecting the input of 23 expert reviewers, including Health

Canada, [CTV News reports](#). Top of the list is a recommendation to do better data collection, analysis and reporting. The experts say this should involve greater consistency under a federal approach to provincial and territorial health data, rapid expansion and use of fast-advancing technologies like artificial intelligence, as well as measures of health outcomes and population health status. Another recommendation is to implement more team-based health service models. Don Drummond, a public policy expert who co-authored the roadmap, said this would shift away from the traditional model of having a lone primary physician tend to most needs of patients to having a variety of health-care workers, including nurse practitioners, registered nurses and pharmacists, sharing patient care responsibilities. The experts are also pushing for better health workforce planning and call such planning “acute,” especially since there is a dwindling number of Canadian-trained medical students and graduates choosing to specialize as family doctors, which could lead to even worse access problems to primary care if nothing is done to address the issue.

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## International

### ***Mexico: Fentanyl-tainted pills now found in Mexican pharmacies from coast to coast***

Mexico has long been a mecca for Americans seeking easier and cheaper access to medications that require a prescription in the US—drugs such as Viagra, Xanax and tramadol. Earlier this year, the *Los Angeles Times* found that pharmacies in several northwestern Mexico cities were selling counterfeit pills over the counter, passing off powerful methamphetamine as Adderall and deadly fentanyl as Percocet and other opioid painkillers. But 4 more months of investigation showed the problem is much broader than previously understood, [the \*Los Angeles Times\* reported last week](#). It's not just stray single pills that are laced with dangerous substances, but sometimes entire bottles that appear to be factory sealed. And the issue isn't restricted to one area—it's happening in tourist hot spots across the country, from the California border to the Yucatán Peninsula and from the southernmost edge of Texas to the Pacific Coast.

### ***UK: Community pharmacies in England administered over 5M flu vaccinations in 2022/23***

English pharmacies administered more than 5 million flu vaccinations under the national flu vaccination service in 2022/23, according to a new report published by the National Health Service (NHS) Business Services Authority. The number is up from 4.85 million administered in community pharmacies in 2021/22, [Pharmacy Business reports](#). The service has continued to achieve year-on-year growth in the number of vaccinations administered since it launched in 2015. “This season’s flu vaccination figures are yet another example of the incredible contribution that our members and their teams make to protect the public and the NHS as part of a key public health program,” said Alastair Buxton, the director of NHS services for Community Pharmacy England. “Given the significant financial and workforce pressures that our members continue to face, this year-on-year growth is a fantastic achievement and a testament to their hard work and dedication.”

***Ireland: Preorder prescription with pharmacist 5 days in advance in case of medicine shortage, patients advised***

The Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (PSI) is now advising patients to order prescriptions with their pharmacist 5 days in advance in case the medicine they need is experiencing a shortage, [the Irish Independent reports](#). This will allow pharmacists time to talk with the patient’s doctor and secure an alternative. The advice came from Joanne Kissane, PSI’s registrar and chief officer, at a briefing on how medicine shortages are being managed. “We are not asking the patients to be aware of the shortages, but to allow additional time for the pharmacist to engage with the [doctor] and recommend a suitable alternative,” she said. Representatives from the Health Service Executive and the Health Products Regulatory Authority said there is a medicine shortage framework in place to mitigate the impact on patients when drugs are in short supply and provide alternatives.

***Germany: Pharmacies close in protest action against increasing demands***

Thousands of pharmacies across Germany closed last week in protest against increasing demands on pharmacists without what they consider sufficient financial compensation, [DW reports](#). Around 85% of the country’s almost 1800 pharmacies closed their doors on June 14, according to the Federal Association of German Pharmacists. Some 1200 locations remained open for emergencies. The protest action is directed at the government’s health-care policies, which pharmacists say have increased their workload, pointing to

bottlenecks in procurement and increasing bureaucracy. Pharmacists are also calling for an increase in the rate they get paid for every prescription medication they dispense. The current rate stands at €8.35 (CAD\$12)—a figure that has not changed in 10 years, despite rising costs. Pharmacists are demanding that this rate be increased to €12 (CAD\$17).

***Australia: More than 20 000 pharmacy jobs could be lost under government's new dispensing policy***

The Pharmacy Guild of Australia is warning that more than 20 000 jobs could be lost and hundreds of pharmacies closed under the government's new dispensing policy, [9NOW reports](#). The plan will see patients able to get double the amount of prescription medicines at a time—60 days' worth instead of a month—and could come into effect as early as next month. But while the scheme is in place to give greater access to vital medications for vulnerable Australians, guild president Trent Twomey said the rollout should be delayed. "While we are all for affordable medicines, what this will see is 20 000 job losses, up to 665 pharmacy closures and Australians can't get more affordable medicines if the pharmacy they rely on is no longer there," he said. The grim forecast, Twomey said, is due to pharmacies having to foot the bill for the medicines becoming more affordable. The findings come from a new report commissioned by the guild, which claims the sector will suffer a loss of AUD\$4.5 billion (the equivalent of CAD\$4 billion) over 4 years due to a decline in dispensing fees and loss of revenue from retail sales.

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## **In Depth**

***Lessons from Marathon, ON: How to rebuild a broken local health-care system***

Across the country and in many rural communities in Ontario, there are staffing crises leading to service closures in emergency departments and obstetrical units in particular. Some of these are temporary, but some reflect the beginnings of the unravelling of local health systems. What happens when small health-care systems in rural communities begin to unravel? What does it take to rebuild them when they reach a breaking point? [Healthy Debate](#) looks

to the experience of the northern Ontario community of Marathon in 1996 for a glimpse of the challenge.

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## Worth Repeating

“People who live in rural areas or those who don’t have access to a primary care physician rely on their community pharmacy for vaccines . . . We don’t want to see [fewer] people being protected from preventable diseases.” —Siva Sivapalan, a community pharmacist in Burlington, Ontario, and a primary care pharmacist in Hamilton, Ontario, [on what the limited vaccine injection authority for Ontario pharmacists means for immunization rates](#) against respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) when the vaccine becomes available this fall

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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.

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