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The Weekly: CPhA's Pharmacy News Update for February 23

From: Canadian Pharmacists Association <advocacy@pharmacists.ca>

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Canadian
Pharmacists
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Association des
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The Weekly

Bringing the world of pharmacy together

February 23, 2022

CPhA

Upcoming webinar on safer opioid supply: Spotlight on the vital role of pharmacists in harm reduction programs

The opioid crisis is an ongoing and devastating issue across Canada, and pharmacists have a vital role to play in reducing the harm associated with drug and substance use to individuals, families and communities. Join us on March 2 from 1:00–2:00pm ET as our expert panellists, Craig Plain, Maria Zhang and Michael A. Beazely, discuss safer opioid supply programs and other harm reduction strategies, review opportunities for interprofessional collaboration, and highlight the pharmacist's role as an advocate for patients with addiction. [Register now.](#)

Pharmacy Appreciation Month: Call for photos

March is just around the corner! You've stepped up to support your patients through thick and thin, and we want to take some time to celebrate you and the incredible work you're doing every day. We'd love to feature you and your pharmacy team in some of our PAM 2022 materials so we can show Canadians even a small piece of your world. Snap a picture of yourself or your pharmacy team in action and email us at socialmedia@pharmacists.ca to participate. Please include the name and location (city and province/territory) of your pharmacy and the full names

of any team members in the photo.

CPhA's CPO on diversity, inclusion, allyship and unlearning

In a [recent blog post](#) for Black History Month, CPhA's Chief Pharmacist Officer, Dr. Danielle Paes, reflects on recent conversations she's had with pharmacists across Canada and what true allyship looks like. "I am committed to promoting equity in pharmacy, not in words or tokenism, but in belief and action," she wrote. "It's going to take courage and humility and a willingness to have tough conversations and I'm here for it."

Provincial

New student-led group aims to improve Black pharmacy students' experiences

A new student-led group aims to improve the experience of Black students and foster a sense of belonging and inclusion at the Leslie Dan Faculty of Pharmacy, [says U of T News](#). The Black Pharmacy Students' Association (BPSA), which launched in January 2022 with 11 members from diverse backgrounds, hopes its efforts will increase the rates of Black pharmacy professionals and even improve care for Black patients. "Increasing representation and diversity within the pharmacy program is important. It can be difficult to put yourself in a place where you don't see anyone who looks like you or know of other people who have paved the path before," said Zaijah Thomas, a third-year PharmD student and president of the BPSA. "We hope to mentor and support young Black students who are interested in the profession so that we can increase the number of Black pharmacy professionals."

Persistent shortage of pharmacists in health-care institutions: survey

The shortage of pharmacists in the public sector is ongoing, according to the Association des pharmaciens des établissements de santé du Québec (APES), which is calling on the government to further promote the profession to solve the shortage. About 1 in 5 positions in the provincial health network are vacant, according to the latest annual survey by APES. This represents 280 full-time equivalent institutional pharmacists as of April 1, 2021. "It's already been 20 years since we've been observing the labour shortage, so it's not a shortage that just happened like we hear about with other professions in the health network," said Linda Vaillant, executive director of APES. The situation is far from improving, the pharmacist [told the Canadian Press](#). She said the construction of seniors' homes, the aging population, the insufficient number of graduates and more retirements will only accentuate the need.

Pharmacists fear easing of COVID-19 restrictions in NB will slow vaccination

New Brunswick has lifted many COVID-19 restrictions, but the executive director of the province's pharmacists' association warns the easing could slow the rate of vaccination, [the Canadian Press reports](#). Jake Reid said pharmacies are already seeing a slower uptake in vaccinations, and Reid is concerned that fewer restrictions could leave parents with less incentive to have their children vaccinated. He said that when restrictions were introduced, the demand for vaccinations went up, but now some pharmacy clinics are only 20–40% full.

Vaccinations are also being offered at community centres and other locations in the province. “There are so many people who need to get their second doses and get their booster shots, and still a lot of children in that younger age group of 5 to 11 that still need to get their first dose,” Reid said. “We still haven’t reached 60% of that age group who have received their first dose.” Reid added vaccination remains the best way to protect against COVID-19, but with the slowing demand, pharmacies have begun to scale back on their clinics. “Some pharmacies have decided to have their clinics only on one day a week, or only a couple of mornings a week,” he said.

Shingles vaccine program to begin at Island pharmacies

Prince Edward Island will launch its publicly funded shingles vaccine program this month, with the Shingrix vaccine available free of charge to PEI seniors, [according to a news release from the province’s Department of Health and Wellness](#). Islanders aged 65 and over can book their free Shingrix vaccine at community pharmacies starting the week of February 21. The cost of the vaccine is being covered by the provincial government. Vaccine appointments can be booked directly by contacting a community pharmacy by phone or through online booking on their website. “Shingles can be a very debilitating condition,” said Erin MacKenzie, executive director of the PEI Pharmacists Association. “By making Shingrix available through community pharmacies, eligible Islanders will have improved access to a vaccine that can help to prevent this condition, which affects approximately one in three people.”

National

McMaster researchers want Canada to expedite approval of ‘newer’ antibiotics

A team of McMaster University researchers is calling on public health officials to improve access to antibiotics in Canada based on data from a recently published [review in *Clinical Infectious Diseases*](#). The group with the DeGroot Institute for Infectious Disease Research says the growing threat of antimicrobial resistance is at stake, considering Canada is the only country of 14 high-income nations introducing just 2 of 18 new drugs to the public in the past decade, [Global News reports](#). “We believe that this can be rectified through incentivization and regulatory improvements, as other G7 countries are doing,” said Lori Burrows, associate director of the DeGroot Institute. “But having these newer antibiotics commercially launched here is just part of the equation. Canada must also expand front-line access to these medications through measures related to data, costs, distribution and supply and demand.”

International

US: APhA urges FTC to fix broken PBM marketplace

The American Pharmacists Association (APhA) has expressed disappointment with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) stalemate vote, which would have supported a study of the Pharmacy Benefit Management (PBM) practices affecting drug prices and, more specifically, the practices that may disadvantage independent or specialty pharmacies. “While we are disappointed with the failed vote, every commissioner at today’s meeting expressed interest in a new study of

PBMs,” APhA wrote [in a statement](#). “Accordingly, we strongly urge the FTC to come to a quick consensus regarding a study that will not only examine PBMs’ anticompetitive practices, but end them. PBMs are putting independent pharmacies out of business and creating ‘pharmacy deserts’ in minority and underserved communities, where the neighbourhood pharmacy may be the only health care provider for miles.” While [testifying](#) at the FTC hearing, APhA CEO Scott Knoer said, “While we support a new study, we already have mountains of data from Medicaid and commercial plans on PBMs’ uncompetitive and deceptive trade practices that target patients with chronic conditions and force them to use PBM-owned specialty, mail order, and network pharmacies. The FTC should take action now, follow the data and break them up!”

UK: A ‘shortfall’ of more than 3000 community pharmacists forcing closures

The Company Chemists’ Association (CCA) has revealed a “worrying shortfall” of more than 3000 community pharmacists in England, a large amount of which has developed over the past 5 years, [the National Health Executive reports](#). Legally, a pharmacist must be present in every pharmacy to allow dispensing of prescriptions; if one is not available, the pharmacy will not be able to remain open. In November 2021, there were an estimated 1700 forced closures of pharmacies due to a lack of pharmacists, putting increasing demand and pressure on general practitioners and emergency departments. “Plans for community pharmacy to do more in primary care are a mere pipe dream unless the government faces the facts. We need the government to recognize the pressures that pharmacies are under and devise a workforce plan that is led by evidence,” said Malcolm Harrison, CEO of CCA. “The current whack-a-mole approach is short-sighted and unhelpful.”

UK: RPS joins UK Health Alliance on climate change

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS) has joined the [UK Health Alliance on Climate Change](#) (UKHACC)—an alliance that brings together a number of organizations, including many royal colleges, faculties of health, the *British Medical Journal* and the *Lancet*. It coordinates action to help amplify the voices of health-care professionals in advocating for responses to climate change that protect and promote public health. In [a news release](#), RPS said its membership in the UKHACC builds on its commitment to climate action within pharmacy and health care more widely. After sustainability was identified as an urgent issue for attention by its national elected boards in 2021, RPS has introduced a range of activities, including issuing a declaration of a climate emergency, producing a series of policies with recommendations to reduce the environmental impact of medicines and pharmacy practice, and committing to fully disinvest from fossil fuels by the end 2022.

Ireland: IPU highlights important role of pharmacists in advising on medication for older people

The Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU) [is encouraging](#) older people and their families to proactively plan for the management of medications and has urged elderly patients and their families to speak to their community pharmacist if they are unsure about how to take their medicines. Community pharmacist and IPU vice president Ann Marie Horan explained the importance of people understanding what medication they are taking. “As people get older they are more likely

to require multiple medications on a daily basis. Advancements in medications have improved our ability to live with disease and generally increased the duration of our lives,” she said. “However, with multiple medicines, there is an increased chance of side effects or harmful interactions between different medicines.” The [#KnowAskCheck medication safety campaign](#) encourages people to know their medicines and keep a list, check that they are using the right medicine correctly and to ask their pharmacist if they are unsure.

Australia: Pharmacy Guild Queensland welcomes government report calling for full scope of practice

The Pharmacy Guild of Australia, Queensland Branch, has welcomed the findings of a Queensland government report calling for an expansion of primary health-care services offered by community pharmacists, [according to a news release](#). The report, “Unleashing the potential: an open and equitable health system,” presents expert advice to the Queensland government on “how best to harness the opportunities arising from the COVID-19 pandemic response to support the best possible health and health care for Queenslanders.” Chris Owen, the Guild’s Queensland Branch president, welcomed the report’s release and said community pharmacists were ready and willing to take part in seeing the recommendations put into action. “One of the lessons out of the COVID-19 pandemic was that communities wanted to be able to seamlessly engage with multiple primary health care providers to receive the best care possible,” Owen said. “Community pharmacies are a critical part of primary health care with consumers visiting, on average, 18 times a year.”

In Depth

More people are turning to melatonin to sleep. But experts say it’s not a panacea for everyone

More adults are turning to melatonin supplements and taking larger amounts of the sleep aid to get a good night’s rest, [according to a new study](#) from the United States. The study, published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA) this month, found that melatonin use “significantly increased” from 1999 to 2018 across all demographic groups. Although considered to be relatively safe, Canadian sleep experts and pharmacists say the supplement may not be beneficial for everyone. CBC [looks at the issue](#).

Worth Repeating

“If governments are finding themselves in the position to ease restrictions—something *everyone* wants—it is thanks to those who answered when called upon to get vaccinated, and not to those who didn’t, and who have seemed intent on kicking the country just as it’s getting back on its feet.” —[An editorial from the *Globe and Mail*](#) praises the quiet majority of Canadians who got their COVID-19 vaccines over the past year, enabling provinces to lift public health measures

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.

Canadian Pharmacists Association
1785 Alta Vista Drive, Ottawa, ON K1G 3Y6

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