

Subject:

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

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

Sent: March 23, 2022 5:00 PM

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Canadian
Pharmacists
Association

Association des
pharmaciens
du Canada

The Weekly

Bringing the world of pharmacy together

March 23, 2022

CPhA

CAPSI Manitoba publication features profile of CPhA's CPO

CPhA's Chief Pharmacist Officer, Dr. Danielle Paes, is [profiled](#) in the *Apothecary*—a publication from the Manitoba chapter of the Canadian Association of Pharmacy Students and Interns (CAPSI) that highlights accomplished Canadian pharmacists who inspire the next generation. In the Q&A, Paes discusses networking, the impact of COVID-19 on the pharmacy sector, and gives advice for pharmacy students.

CPhA's CPO on women in pharmacy leadership

In recognition of International Women's Day, Dr. Danielle Paes [reflected on](#) women in pharmacy leadership, her own journey, and the moments that serve to remind us how far we've come, but how far we still have to go.

New drug shortage resource: Propranolol long-acting oral capsules (Inderal-LA)

All lots of all strengths of Inderal-LA capsules [have been recalled](#) in Canada due to a nitrosamine impurity. CPhA and medSask have developed a new resource to assist health providers in managing patient care due to the recall of Inderal-LA. The resource, which is

available in [English](#) and [French](#), provides general considerations and guidance on how to switch to immediate-release propranolol, other beta-blockers or therapeutic alternatives. See CPS for indication-specific alternatives.

PAM celebrations continue: How you can participate

We're now in the home stretch 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 asked patients to tell us why they love their pharmacy team by nominating them for a chance to win a tablet for themselves and their favourite pharmacy team member. Submissions closed on March 21 and we've received more than 450 submissions from across the country. Stay tuned for the announcement of the winners.

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.

Pharmacy Appreciation Month

Federal Minister of Health thanks pharmacy professionals

Jean-Yves Duclos, Canada's minister of health, thanked pharmacy professionals for their ongoing dedication and commitment to Canadians' well-being [in a Pharmacy Appreciation Month message](#) on March 22. He noted pharmacy professionals are a critical part of the health-care team that keeps people living in Canada safe and healthy, especially evident over the past 2 years of the COVID-19 pandemic. "We are grateful that throughout the pandemic, pharmacy teams have shown up each day ready to care for and guide their communities through the many challenges we have faced. With more than 45,000 pharmacists and 9,900 pharmacy technicians in Canada, working in over 11,000 pharmacies, pharmacy professionals are the most accessible health-care providers in the country," he said. Pharmacies in every province and territory have played and continue to play a critical role in screening and testing, as well as the largest vaccine rollout in Canada's history. Pharmacy professionals have administered more than 17 million COVID-19 vaccines across Canada, the minister added.

Pharmacists on the front line

Rural health-care workers get boost from pharmacy students

In Alberta, many services that once required an appointment with a family doctor—including some prescriptions, referrals, disease screenings, provision of health advice, precision medicine and vaccinations—can now be provided by a pharmacist. And pharmacists, along with the students they train, are prepared to serve rural communities, [Troy Media reports](#). “Every year I work in a small town, I love it more and more,” said Alma Steyn, owner of Gourlay’s Clinic Pharmacy in Canmore. “That connection you get with people—the patients and the other health-care professionals we work with—is unbelievable.” In rural pharmacies like Steyn’s across the province, University of Alberta pharmacy students are training in a complex work placement and discovering the benefits of practising in a smaller community. “Some of the products that I’m compounding here, I’ve never seen anywhere else,” said Olivia Stephen, a fourth-year pharmacy student completing her final placement with Steyn. “For example, we have different compounds and medications that we make for emergency pain management for the ski hills.”

Role of pharmacists continues to expand in PEI

Pharmacists are easily accessible to the public and their role in primary care continues to grow, but a Montague, PEI, pharmacist says they could be doing even more in light of the shortage of family doctors, [PEICanada.com reports](#). Chris McKenna, the owner of McKenna’s PharmaChoice on Queens Road, hopes PEI will move toward a new model being piloted in Nova Scotia that sees pharmacists and nurse practitioners working side-by-side to provide care. He said there should be more primary care coverage in eastern PEI, which would free up resources for physicians to deal with patients with more complex health issues. “[If] they expand the scope and somebody can come in and get treated for an increased list of conditions at a pharmacy, maybe that’s a better spend of health care dollars [than dedicated walk-in clinics],” he said. Pharmacies have seen their role growing larger for years, and the pandemic has accelerated that. McKenna also noted that pharmacies have kept their doors open 7 days a week throughout the pandemic.

Public pill drop aims to dispose of unused, expired medications

Residents across Newfoundland and Labrador were encouraged to visit their local pharmacy on March 22 to dispose of expired and unused medication, [VOCM reports](#). The public pill drop took place in conjunction with the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary and RCMP at Shoppers Drug Mart locations on the island and Guardian Hamilton Drugs in Labrador. Keith Bailey, operator of the pharmacy at the Shoppers Drug Mart in Conception Bay South, said it’s very important for medications to be properly disposed of, as some drugs become unsafe after a while. Bailey noted he’s had patients bring back cold and flu medication that’s been expired for 5 or 6 years, asking if they are still safe to use. He added that old medications pose safety concerns in the home, community and society in general.

Free take-home naloxone kits available at more than 70 pharmacies across SK

Take-home naloxone kits are now available at 225 locations across Saskatchewan, including at 71 pharmacies in 76 different communities, [according to CTV](#). Naloxone is a medication that can temporarily reverse the effects of an opioid overdose and allow time for medical help to arrive. Since the Take Home Naloxone Program started in 2015, more than 29 000 naloxone kits have been distributed, with more than 6800 confirmed to have been used. Free training on administering naloxone is also available at the pharmacies.

“Menstruation education”: Breaking the stigma around talking about periods

A Regina man has teamed up with a pharmacist to release a series of videos about common misconceptions and lessons about menstruation, [CTV reports](#). Local business owner Matt Thompson said men aren't taught a lot about menstrual cycles, even though about 50% of the population goes through them. “It's just something I realized I knew nothing about,” Thompson said. “I was just like, ‘This is something I need to know about.’” Sarah Kozusko, a pharmacist at Queen City Wellness Pharmacy, said in the videos that some menstruating people may experience light flow for a few days or a heavier flow. “It might last for weeks out of the month, it might last a whole month, it might barely even be noticeable, it might be every few months, depending on where you are in your life and how your health is,” she said. Kozusko said it's great to see men taking it upon themselves to learn more, as she believes everybody should be able to talk openly about their bodies and understand each other's bodies in a non-sexual way. Kozusko hopes those participating in “Menstruation Education” learn that periods aren't a dirty secret or dirty in general.

Waterloo health-tech start up gets \$2.7M in seed funding from Microsoft

A Waterloo-based start-up that helps pharmacists book COVID-19 vaccines and tests secured US\$2.7 million in seed funding to expand its successful health-technology platform, [according to the Waterloo Region Record](#). Anyone who booked a COVID-19 vaccine appointment at a pharmacy likely used the software developed by MedMe Health, which currently serves more than 14 million patients at 3600 pharmacies across Canada. Now it's backed by Microsoft's venture fund M12, with the funding announced on March 17. MedMe Health is a web-based platform supporting scheduling, documentation and clinical-services management at major pharmacy chains including Rexall, Shoppers Drug Mart, Guardian, IDA, Remedy'sRx and Pharmasave. Last year, it helped pharmacies administer more than 2.2 million COVID-19 vaccine doses and 155,000 COVID-19 tests, as well as flu shots. In December 2021 alone, 760,000 appointments were booked through the platform.

Quebec expands access to antiviral drug Paxlovid, soon available in pharmacies

The Quebec government is expanding access to the antiviral drug Paxlovid, announcing on March 17 that it will soon be available in pharmacies, [the Canadian Press reports](#). Patients will have to obtain a prescription from a physician or specialized nurse practitioner following a positive COVID-19 test result. The oral antiviral drug, which was approved by Health Canada on

January 17, is intended to reduce the severity of COVID-19 symptoms in people at risk of developing serious complications, including hospitalization and death.

Nova Scotia pharmacies continuing to prescribe mask use

Although the Nova Scotia government didn't include pharmacies on its list of places where masks must continue to be worn, the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia (PANS) considers pharmacies to be health-care settings and is strongly recommending that its members keep their mask rules in place, [CBC reports](#). Diane Harpell, the chair of PANS and owner of the Medicine Shoppe Pharmacy in Dartmouth, said she doesn't know how long the association's masking recommendation will continue. "We sort of go week by week on our decisions, but I can see masking in health-care settings being something in place for quite a while to come," she said, adding that masks protect people from many infections. "We've had the benefit of being masked and keeping our staff healthy from a lot of things that you run into, whether it's flu, stomach bugs, just common cold, and of course, COVID."

National

Canada wants WHO approval for Medicago COVID-19 vaccine so it can be donated

International Development Minister Harjit Sajjan says he wants the World Health Organization (WHO) to greenlight Medicago's COVID-19 shot so it can be donated and used by the COVAX vaccine-sharing alliance, [CBC reports](#). But Sajjan says Canada's ability to get more doses out the door to lower-income countries depends mostly on getting reassurance they can and will be used when they are sent. WHO [paused the process](#) for pre-qualification of Medicago's vaccine last week due to its link to Marlboro cigarette manufacturer Philip Morris International. Mariângela Simao, WHO's assistant director-general for drug access, vaccines and pharmaceuticals, said the shot will "very likely" not be approved for emergency use because of the company's ties to the tobacco industry. Canada is promising to donate at least 200 million doses by the end of the year, but only 15 million have been delivered so far.

International

US: Pharmacy professionals need to prioritize their own mental health to help patients

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed pharmacies in a vital role on the front lines of care, but the increased demands for their services also caused a subsequent rise in burnout among pharmacy staff, [according to the Pharmacy Times](#). As such, it is just as essential for pharmacy professionals to prioritize their own mental health as it is for them to help their patients. "There is a difference between when you're feeling stressed and when you are ultimately feeling burnt out," Alex Varkey, director of pharmacy services at Houston Methodist Hospital, said during a session at the American Pharmacists Association Annual Meeting 2022. "From a self-assessment standpoint, understanding 'okay, hey am I just feeling stressed out? Is this kind of based on one particular incidence or...I'm starting to feel burnt out?'" Varkey said. One helpful tool to help identify whether an individual is burnt out is the Pharmacist Well-Being Index. The

assessment allows pharmacy professionals to track their professional well-being and monitor clinical burnout.

New Zealand: Remedy needed for dire pharmacist shortage

The fallout from an “almost catastrophic” nationwide shortage of pharmacists is being felt in Nelson, with one pharmacy owner having to ditch a popular free prescriptions initiative because of escalating expenses, [according to Stuff](#). Another long-established Nelson pharmacy, Life Pharmacy Prices, has had to close on Sundays because of staff shortages, as the region struggles with a tight labour market. John Handforth, who has been a pharmacist since 1995, says his pharmacies are busier than ever while still being 2 or 3 pharmacists down—a situation which is becoming “unworkable.” Another Nelson pharmacy was down 4 or 5 pharmacists, he understood. The problem is due to a combination of factors, including that an aging population means more people are presenting prescriptions, Handforth says. He believes the Ministry of Health is being “negligent” in its workforce planning to ensure there are enough registered pharmacists “in the system” now and coming through in the future, and it urgently needs to address the problem. A lot of pharmacists have exited the industry in recent years, he says, because workplace satisfaction has dropped and it is a “high demand, high stress job.”

Australia: Queensland residents and general practitioners divided on full scope of practice pilot for community pharmacists

Findings from new, independent research have shown strong support for a pilot of a full scope of health-care services in community pharmacies, with more than three-quarters of surveyed Queenslanders in favour, [according to Mirage News](#). The pilot would allow pharmacists to diagnose 23 conditions, including asthma and type 2 diabetes, without any consultations with a doctor. The independent research, commissioned by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, Queensland Branch, also revealed that support in North Queensland is even stronger, where almost 80% of respondents are in favour of the proposed pilot. However, the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) has [urgently warned](#) the Queensland government to abandon the pilot due to concerns that it will fragment care and lead to poorer patient health outcomes. The RACGP and other medical bodies have resigned from the pilot’s steering committee amidst serious concerns regarding patient safety. RACGP Queensland Chair, Dr. Bruce Willett, said that the pharmacy scope of practice pilot is riddled with risks. “When it comes to this pilot, one of the main concerns we have with how it’s currently configured is training,” he said. “Ultimately, we want pharmacists working within our practice and there may be times when they can prescribe under the supervision of the GP. However, under this pilot pharmacists will be operating without supervision in a retail space separate from other healthcare professions, including GPs.”

In Depth

Groundbreaking approach charts new territory for role pharmacists can play in prescribing plasma protein and related products

A collaborative team from Canadian Blood Services and the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario received a prestigious national award for research [showing impressive early results](#) for patients with certain blood disorders. The award-winning project engaged a hospital pharmacist to help deliver more personalized care for young hemophilia patients—a Canadian first. This groundbreaking approach charts new territory for the role pharmacists can play in prescribing plasma protein and related products. It also resulted in the joint team receiving the [2022 Excellence in Pharmacy Practice – Leadership Award](#) from the Canadian Society of Hospital Pharmacists, which recognizes projects that inspire a shared higher purpose and vision of pharmacy care.

Worth Repeating

“One of our greatest successes in Canada has been vaccination. More than 85% of those eligible have had at least 2 shots. But fewer than 47% have received a third dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. That’s a lot like building a great fortress and then leaving the drawbridge open. We should not, after 2 years of solid effort and no small amount of sacrifice, be so foolish as to abandon prevention.”—*Globe and Mail* columnist André Picard [writes](#) the best way to get the pandemic behind us is to not declare it over prematurely

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.

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