



Canadian
Pharmacists
Association

Association des
pharmaciens
du Canada

The Weekly

Bringing the world of pharmacy together

November 23, 2022

CPhA

Antibiotic shortages: New CPhA resources to support pharmacists

As Canada experiences a shortage of some antibiotics, primarily liquid formulations of amoxicillin, CPhA continues to be involved in discussions with Health Canada and other stakeholders to better understand the situation and represent pharmacists. Given the potential scope of the shortage's impact, CPhA was involved in discussions last week to designate the amoxicillin shortage a [Tier 3 drug shortage](#). CPhA has published a number of resources to support and keep pharmacists informed, including a [new webpage](#), a [Q&A resource](#) for pharmacy professionals, and a [clinical resource on therapeutic alternatives](#) to amoxicillin. All resources are also available in [French](#).

Update on imported supply of children's acetaminophen and new resources for pharmacists

Health Canada held a press conference on November 18 to provide [an update](#) on the foreign supply of children's acetaminophen and ibuprofen. By the end of this week, over 1 million bottles of children's pain and fever medications for hospitals, community pharmacies and retail outlets will have been imported into Canada. In addition to important product and labelling information shared

directly by the manufacturer, a supply update has also been posted to [Tylenol's website](#). CPhA continues to update our resources to support pharmacists, including our [resource page](#) and [Q&A for pharmacists](#).

New acetaminophen dosing tool for health professionals

CPhA has produced a tool on how to use 325 mg acetaminophen tablets to create children's doses. This resource—available in [English](#) and [French](#)—is intended to be used by health-care professionals to guide parents and caregivers on the administration of acetaminophen during the shortage of children's products.

Upcoming webinar: A look at the importance of the pharmacist's role in COVID-19 outpatient therapies

Registration is now open for the next session in our COVID Conversations webinar series. Join us on November 30 from 7:00–8:00 pm ET as our speakers cover the latest information you need to know about COVID-19, including outpatient therapies, national and provincial guidelines, eligibility criteria, and how to mitigate the risk of any drug interactions. *This webinar is being hosted by CPhA on behalf of Pfizer. The event is currently under CCCEP accreditation review.* [Register here](#).

Pharmacy Check-in: Meet Susie Jin

November is [Diabetes Awareness Month](#), and we recently caught up with Certified Diabetes Educator (CDE) Susie Jin to discuss the role pharmacists play in the prevention, screening and management of diabetes. "If I had to choose the #1 thing that we can do to support people in their diabetes management, it would be to *advocate* for people affected by diabetes," Jin said. Advocating involves listening to people and understanding what they need to support them in improving their own health outcomes. It involves shared decision-making and supporting self-management so that people can make their own informed choice, while increasing access to equitable care." [Read more about Jin](#) and her work in diabetes care.

Pharmacy on the front lines

Are expired medications safe to consume? Here's what experts say

Canadians should avoid stockpiling and consuming expired medication, some experts say, as drug shortages continue to trouble the country. “The advice is always if you have expired medications, you should dispose of them rather than use them. The real reason for this is that with medications, the expiry date is really the date that you can guarantee that the specific dose [on the bottle] is the dose you can expect to receive [benefits for] when you take it,” Kelly Grindrod, associate professor of pharmacy at the University of Waterloo, [told Global News](#). Grindrod said this advice applies to all expired drugs, whether in tablet or liquid form. However, if someone does consume expired medication by accident, Grindrod clarifies that it won't pose any serious risk or danger to the body. Grindrod explains that drugs degrade over time, and some degrade faster than others, depending on what kind of medication it is and if it was stored in a hot or humid place, which can make it degrade sooner than usual. “So instead of getting a dose [worth] of, say, 300 milligrams, . . . you might only get 200 milligrams of the [product's effectiveness] or 150 milligrams,” she said. “So, [the medications] are less likely to be effective.”

Methadone access should be expanded, pharmacist tells Prince Albert, SK, council

A pharmacist has asked Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, city council to reconsider the zoning rules that stop most pharmacies in the city from dispensing methadone, [Prince Albert NOW reports](#). Amy Lamb, who is also co-chair of the Indigenous Pharmacy Professionals of Canada, said patients have the right to access methadone wherever they want and that crime actually drops when patients have more access. “The rate of violent and nonviolent crimes reduces by one-third if the patient is stabilized on methadone. The annual costs to the health care system for someone who is on methadone is \$6,000 versus \$45,000 for someone who is untreated,” she said. Methadone is given to people addicted to opioids to help stabilize their lives and help them stop using illegal forms like heroin or fentanyl, Lamb explained. When a patient starts the program, they are heavily monitored by the professional dispensing the drug, which can include pharmacists. In 2018, the council amended its zoning bylaw to allow methadone only in certain zonings, and that is what Lamb is seeking to change.

Provincial

More than 1 million bottles of children's medication to hit shelves this week. They might not last long

More than 1 million bottles of foreign-sourced children's pain and fever medication will be arriving in Canada, Health Canada said on November 18, [according to the *Toronto Star*](#). But the agency did not say how much of that will be accessible to parents or how much more will be necessary to alleviate the nationwide shortage. Dr. Supriya Sharma, chief medical advisor for Health Canada, said in a news conference last week that 3 proposals to import foreign products had been approved, and supply of children's ibuprofen and acetaminophen has started to enter the country. The 1 million bottles expected to hit shelves this week includes product headed for hospitals—some of which has already been distributed—as well as for pharmacies and retailers, where parents and caregivers can access it. Justin Bates, CEO of the Ontario Pharmacists Association, said that influx would not be enough to fix the problem. “Based on the demand, and the fact that we're seeing the spread and infection rates so high for RSV, colds, flu and COVID, that 1 million is not going to last long. That number is for the entire country,” Bates said. “The challenge is going to be to ration that, and look at strategies to avoid panic buying.”

QC pharmacist owners want to be included in strategies aimed at stimulating employment, says AQPP

The Quebec Association of Proprietary Pharmacists (AQPP) has called on the provincial government to include community pharmacy in the programs and strategies being implemented to stimulate employment in the health sector. The shortage of pharmacists and pharmacy support staff is the most worrisome issue the association is facing in the short term, with considerable impacts to health care in Quebec, AQPP said [in a news release](#) that was translated from French. The association wants community pharmacy to be included in the government's programs and strategies for addressing health-care labour shortages, whether this includes increasing student cohorts, recognizing international graduates, or implementing accelerated training programs for certain types of pharmacy positions. “We would like the government to pay particular attention to the allocation of resources and to reflect on solutions that will increase the number of employees in our

pharmacies, which offer more and more clinical services, especially where emergency departments are overflowing and where the health system is under more pressure than ever,” said AQPP president Benoit Morin. “Like other health professionals, community pharmacists must benefit from the strategies put forward by the government to maintain their role as providers of agile and efficient care to benefit Quebec patients.”

Pharmacists ‘stretched thin’ amidst pandemic pressures, drug shortages

After working as a pharmacist for 8 years, Sheryl Mahar has felt the strain of the past several years, working long days with little time left to spend on her family and herself. “It’s been quite stressful—we’re stretched pretty thin,” she [told CTV](#) from her community pharmacy in Hatcher Lake, Nova Scotia. “It’s hard because you want to get everyone everything that they need, but you constantly feel like you’re treading water because there’s so much to do.” Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, pharmacists like Mahar have worked when many people were under lockdown at home. Then, they played a key role in the COVID-19 vaccine rollout. Now, on top of the busy immunization season, they’re also dealing with an ongoing shortage of children’s medications and amoxicillin. In addition, over the past number of years, pharmacists have also been given authority by provinces to diagnose minor ailments, prescribe certain medications and interpret diagnostic tests. At the same time, many pharmacists have reported experiencing hostility at the counter. “We have people protesting, we have people threatening, we have people just generally being rude,” said Allison Bodnar, CEO of the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia. “[They’re] not understanding the volume of services and the things that are changing and evolving in order for pharmacies to serve people better.”

National

Shoppers Drug Mart parent company says cough and cold sales hit all-time high

Canada’s biggest drugstore chain has said sales of cough and cold products have hit an all-time high this fall, [the Canadian Press reports](#). Loblaw Cos. Ltd. chairman and president Galen G. Weston said the combination of COVID-19, RSV and the flu has led to a record number of cough and cold medication

sales at the company's pharmacies, which include Shoppers Drug Mart and Pharmaprix. Weston said the "unusual pressure" on the industry has led to shortages, leaving retailers with limited stock for some medications. He said manufacturers are working hard to get more product available, but it's difficult to say when the shortages will end. The company's pharmacy front store same-store sales, which include over-the-counter medication sales but not prescription drugs, increased by 10.7% in the quarter that ended on October 8. Metro Inc., which runs pharmacies including Jean Coutu and Brunet, also reported a 9.9% increase in pharmacy front store same-store sales in its latest quarter.

Families should get flu shots as soon as possible, Canadian Paediatric Society says

Get a flu shot as soon as possible, the Canadian Paediatric Society has urged families, as respiratory viruses continue to seriously sicken some babies and young children across the country, [CBC reports](#). National flu activity continued to "increase sharply," the Public Health Agency of Canada said in its FluWatch report for the week ending November 12. "All surveillance indicators are increasing and are above expected levels typical of this time of year." The agency declared the start of the annual flu epidemic early last week, more than a month earlier than the average before the COVID-19 pandemic. Hospitalizations associated with flu are also at levels typically seen at the peak of influenza season, with a sharp rise among children and teens. The influenza flu vaccine is especially important for young children, who are at a higher risk of becoming seriously ill from the virus, said Dr. Laura Sauvé, chair of the society's infectious diseases and immunization committee. The Canadian Paediatric Society and National Advisory Committee on Immunization recommend that all children 6 months and older receive an annual influenza vaccine.

U of T to study how pharmacists can better support health care in Canada

The University of Toronto's Leslie Dan Faculty of Pharmacy and Dalla Lana School of Public Health are collaborating to study how pharmacists can better support Canada's overburdened health system, [according to U of T News](#). The research will review and evaluate what the expanded role for pharmacists might achieve and how pharmacy teams can help improve access to care in communities. This new collaboration, supported by a generous \$3 million

donation from Shoppers Drug Mart, will create a strong engine for evidence and knowledge transfer around pharmacy practice, health policy, data science and improved patient care. “Pharmacy teams reach more people daily than any other part of our health system. We are very excited about this partnership and the potential for pharmacy and public health experts to deliver viable and sustainable solutions for our health system that is currently experiencing incredible strain,” said Lisa Dolovich, dean of the Leslie Dan Faculty of Pharmacy. The funding will support research projects aimed at the twin goals of understanding the expanding role of pharmacists and how a more integrated health system can connect and leverage care in pharmacies.

Minister of Health tables 2021 annual PMPRB report

Minister of Health Jean-Yves Duclos tabled the 2021 Annual Report of the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board (PMPRB) with the Clerks of the Senate and the House of Commons on November 18. The 2021 report outlines the continuing rise in the sales of high-cost medicines in Canada, [according to a news release](#). Sales of patented medicines were \$17.4 billion in 2021, driven primarily by the increased use of higher-cost medicines. Medicines with an average annual treatment cost of at least \$10,000 accounted for 57% of patented medicine sales in Canada in 2021, while 5% of total sales can be attributed to 29 medicines that cost over \$100,000 per year.

International

New study reveals the extent of antibiotic misuse for a common sore throat, fuelling the third-leading cause of death worldwide

A [new global study](#) launched during World Antimicrobial Awareness Week (November 18 to 24) shows a high dependence on antibiotics for treating respiratory conditions like sore throat, which is helping to fuel antibiotic resistance—the third-leading cause of death worldwide, associated with 4.95 million deaths a year. The Sore Throat & Antibiotic Resistance (STAR) study, commissioned by the Global Respiratory Infection Partnership and Reckitt, the makers of Strepsils, found that over half of adults surveyed had taken antibiotics for symptoms of a respiratory tract infection like a sore throat in the past 6 months despite antibiotics being ineffective for 9 out of 10 sore throats. Upper respiratory tract infections represent the leading cause for global

antibiotic misuse in adults. The study findings suggest a misunderstanding of how to treat sore throats is contributing to antibiotic overuse, as 61% of adults under 35 believe antibiotics are effective for a sore throat. Almost half (45%) of this age group said they don't know how to treat respiratory conditions without antibiotics.

US: How is pharmacist burnout being addressed?

The growing trend of overworked pharmacists has been worsening over the last 3 years and that's raising concerns about patient health and safety, [FOX Business reports](#). "Pharmacists were already on a collision course with burnout before the pandemic," says Heidi Polek, a registered pharmacist and a strategic program manager at digital health company DrFirst. "No matter how hard or long they work, the clock is winning," she says. "Nearly three-quarters of pharmacists in a recent survey said they do not have sufficient time to safely care for patients and perform all the clinical services that come into the pharmacy." That goes to show that burnout is more serious than a matter of pharmacists who need a vacation, Polek added. Plus, she said many pharmacists want more time for patient care, to take on more of the critically needed health-care services that led them to become a pharmacist in the first place. "And patients today trust that pharmacists will be available to do more of their family's basic healthcare, such as medication therapy management, flu and COVID testing and treatment programs, and in many states, triage and care of minor ailments," Polek said. "If we don't address burnout in the pharmacy, we stand to lose patient trust and the momentum it's taken generations of pharmacists to achieve."

US: Anti-abortion groups ask US court to pull approval for abortion drugs

Anti-abortion groups filed a lawsuit on November 18 asking a court to overturn US regulators' approval of the drug mifepristone for medication abortion, which could hobble access to medication abortion nationwide, [Reuters reports](#). The lawsuit, filed in Amarillo, Texas, federal court by the Alliance for Hippocratic Medicine, American Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians and Gynecologists, and others, said the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) lacked authority to approve the drug for abortion when it did so in 2000 and that it failed to study its risks for minors adequately. Earlier this year, President Joe Biden's administration moved to expand access to medication abortion after the US Supreme Court in June overturned its landmark 1973 Roe v. Wade decision.

guaranteeing abortion rights nationwide. Mifepristone is a prescription drug approved by the FDA to induce an abortion up to 10 weeks into a pregnancy. It must be followed by a second drug, misoprostol. Both drugs also have other uses. The plaintiffs in Friday's lawsuit said the FDA improperly approved mifepristone for abortion in 2000 under an expedited process intended to allow patients quicker access to better treatments for an illness, even though pregnancy is not an illness, and waived a requirement to study it separately for pediatric patients.

UK: Pause prescription charges to help hardest hit by cost-of-living crisis, says RPS

Health bodies including the Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS) are [calling on](#) the government to pause prescription charges as part of a call for targeted support for those with ill health or disabilities—the people most impacted by the cost-of-living crisis. A [letter](#) signed by 63 members of the health-care charity coalition National Voices, including the RPS, after reports that some patients are struggling to afford prescription costs suggests supports such as the reimbursement of utility costs for those using medical devices as well as pausing all prescription charges. “England is the only country in the UK that makes patients pay for their prescriptions,” said Thorrun Govind, chair of the RPS. “Amid a cost-of-living crisis, the government should act now to address this inequality and scrap prescription charges altogether. This would be fairer for patients and allow pharmacists to focus on clinical care, rather than avoidable red tape.” The letter also said that 22% of people were seeing their support network less, predominantly due to the cost of transport, and that people on low incomes, especially those with specific dietary needs, were struggling to eat a healthy and balanced diet because of rising food costs.

UK: New research a first step toward sustainable medicine prescribing in Scotland

The UK Medical Research Council (MRC) is funding the development of an eco-formulary in Scotland that aims to reduce pharmaceutical pollution by changing prescribing practices. The environmental impact of each medicine will be assessed by taking into account environmental monitoring data, excretion profiles and the amount removed in wastewater treatment, [according to a press release from University of Nottingham](#). The university is one of the recipients of a £100,000 (CDN\$160,000) grant from the MRC to develop a framework for an eco-directed formulary that will incorporate environmental

data on medicines into the prescribing process, alongside clinical and cost effectiveness. “This research will generate new knowledge sharing and awareness of the environmental impact of medicines, and help benefit the NHS, prescribers, patients, and the environment we rely on,” said Claire Anderson, president of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society and a professor in the University of Nottingham’s School of Pharmacy. “It has the potential for both UK and global impact on the choices that health professionals make about which medicines to include in formularies.”

Australia: Pharmacists lacking the resources needed to provide quality contraceptive advice, survey shows

Community pharmacists feel they lack “the necessary resources” to provide quality patient-centric contraceptive advice, a [national survey](#) of Australian community pharmacists has found, [according to the Australian Journal of Pharmacy](#) (subscriber access only). Around 85% of pharmacists said that counselling patients around contraception was part of their professional role, but there were a number of limitations to giving quality contraceptive counselling. Of those surveyed, 55% said a lack of training and 54% said inadequate technical assistance tools were holding them back, while 66% said the lack of a payment regime was a major barrier to them being able to offer better advice. The research comes just over a week since the New South Wales government announced a statewide pilot where appropriately trained pharmacists could prescribe medications for certain conditions, such as skin ailments, ear infections and hormonal contraception. The researchers from Monash University contacted 2149 community pharmacies nationally in a postal survey between September and December 2020. In terms of confidence in their abilities, the respondents’ self-rated knowledge was highest with oral contraceptive pills but lowest when it came to the copper intrauterine device (IUD).

Australia: Community pharmacists at higher risk of burnout, study finds

New research from Australian National University reveals community pharmacists are at a higher risk of burnout with increased workload and overtime work, rude patients, emotional exhaustion, and lack of personal protective equipment, compared to other groups of pharmacists in Australia. The study explored contrasting experiences of pharmacists during the COVID-19 pandemic and surveyed pharmacists working in Australia during April and

June 2020, [according to the Australian Journal of Pharmacy](#) (subscriber access only). Among 647 responses, 2 clusters were identified—the “affected” pharmacist and the “business as usual” pharmacist—which described 2 very different pharmacist experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Just over half of respondents fell into the “affected” pharmacist category, with high degrees of burnout—the majority (64.3%) of which primarily worked in community pharmacy. “There has been no recovery, no reprieve from the significant burden placed on pharmacists,” said Karlee Johnston, pharmacist and lead author of the study. “The ongoing high workload and dedication that pharmacists are showing by consistently providing high quality in-person healthcare to their communities is exceptional.”

In Depth

How to get messaging right on masks, vaccines as ‘triple threat’ of viruses swirl

Public health officials looking to get buy-in among Canadians for health measures like masking and vaccination should use more positive, targeted and personal appeals—and they should follow their own advice, bioethicists and infectious diseases experts say. Lessons can also be learned from the success that Canada has seen in decreasing the number of monkeypox cases in the country over the past 6 months, some experts added, noting that a lack of “shame-based” messaging and partnerships struck with key communities in response to that outbreak meant public health measures on monkeypox were widely followed—which helped to decrease the virus as a public health threat. [Global News](#) explains.

Worth Repeating

“The pediatric system is getting hit really hard. And we’re still just in November . . . We’ve got a long virus season left.” —Dr. Kelly Grindrod, University of Waterloo professor and pharmacist, [telling BBC](#) about the triple whammy of viruses affecting Canadians, especially children

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.

Canadian Pharmacists Association
851 Industrial Avenue, Mailbox M035
Ottawa, ON K1G 4L3

[Contact Us](#)

