

Subject: The Weekly: CPhA’s Pharmacy News Update for August 24

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

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Canadian
Pharmacists
Association Association des
pharmaciens
du Canada

The Weekly

Bringing the world of pharmacy together

August 24, 2022

CPhA

CPhA clarifies requirement for prescriptions for Tylenol and Advil for children

In response to media reports indicating that prescriptions were a requirement for liquid Tylenol or Advil for children, CPhA [released a statement](#) clarifying the situation. The statement read: “You do not need a prescription to purchase liquid Tylenol or Advil for children. How products are scheduled (meaning prescription vs. over the counter) is determined by Health Canada and pharmacy regulators.” The statement was released after Toronto’s Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids) [advised parents and caregivers of its patients](#) that they would now need a prescription for children’s acetaminophen or ibuprofen products for take-home use due to the nationwide shortage. However, on August 16, the hospital [clarified that advice](#), saying it “recommended” a prescription “to help ensure access” to a pharmacy’s larger stock bottles, adding that its original message was not meant for the general public. The CPhA statement advised that repackaging product into smaller quantities will take time and asked for patience. It also reiterated that there may be other formulations that are available and encouraged all caregivers to speak to their pharmacist to determine the best way to access

medication that will be right for their child. “We urge everyone to not purchase larger quantities than what they need, so that all caregivers can access what they need, when they need it,” the statement concluded.

Keeping you in the know: Resource updates

Infant formula: Our resource page has everything you need to know about the ongoing hypoallergenic infant formula shortage. [Take a look](#) at the latest information for health-care providers.

Childhood vaccination: The [Resource Round-up](#) on childhood vaccination has been updated with a few new items, including a checklist for caregivers that can help make the experience easier for the child, parent and immunizer.

Vaccine authority: While pharmacy professionals have administered millions of COVID-19 vaccines and deliver millions of flu shots each year, they are authorized to administer a broad range of other vaccines too. Here’s what their vaccination authority [looks like](#) across Canada.

Pharmacy on the frontlines

Worried about a shortage of children’s medications? Here’s what you need to know

Parents across the country have noted empty shelves where they had hoped to find pediatric acetaminophen or ibuprofen products, like liquid Tylenol and Advil, or chewable tablets. Conflicting advice from health organizations has led to confusion about how to buy the products and has prompted concerns about potential panic-buying. Pharmacists and other health organizations are urging the public not to hoard the medicines, as there are backup options available, and pharmacists can offer individualized advice for treating kids. Here’s a [Q&A from CBC](#), including comments from CPhA and other provincial pharmacy associations, to help clarify and explain the situation further.

Provincial

Edmonton pharmaceutical company gives parents options during children’s drug supply interruption

An Edmonton company that acts as a platform to connect pharmacies with professionals who make compound drugs is trying to help parents with an alternative to the children’s liquid pain medication supply crunch, [reports CTV](#). “Children not

having access to pain medication and fever medication in this time, at this season just seems unacceptable,” said Morenike Eniola Olaosebikan, KemNet founder and CEO. “I really wish more people would know that this is an option,” she said. “Compounded medications are custom made drugs for individual patients that take into consideration allergies or particular organ function or age and sometimes when there is a shortage like the situation we’re in,” said Olaosebikan. Compound pharmacists are able to make drugs on demand and Olaosebikan said they have the ingredients needed to make children’s cold and fever medications. “We were able to find compounders who sourced the ingredients and we’re ready to supply any pharmacy or Alberta or Canadian in need,” she said. Typically compounded medications are covered by most drug plans, but not in this case because it is an over-the-counter medication. “We’ve made sure the price to the end user is \$10 for the medication so we’ve made sure that it’s very accessible,” said Olaosebikan.

Mednow officially opens to serve patients in Quebec, with newest location serving as pharmacy distribution centre

Mednow has said it is officially open to serve patients in Quebec, with its newest location serving as the pharmacy distribution centre for all Mednow customers in the province, offering fast, free prescription delivery and deep commitment to pharmacist-led patient care, [according to Pro Active Investor](#). In addition to creating space for in-person pharmacist consultations and clinics, the 6300 square foot facility prioritizes virtual patient care with a thoughtfully designed space for multiple pharmacists to do real-time private virtual patient consultations and medication reviews and provide virtual clinic services and prescriptions for minor ailments. “We’re thrilled to serve Quebec. Launching in Quebec is in line with our goal of being a truly national virtual pharmacy operating all across Canada, serving Mednow patients where they live and work,” said Ali Reyhany, Mednow CEO.

National

Metro names new president for Jean Coutu Group pharmacy arm

Jean-Michel Coutu has been appointed president of The Jean Coutu Group, the pharmacy division of Canadian food and drug retailer Metro, [reports Supermarket News](#). Plans call for Coutu to take the reins from current Jean Coutu Group president Alain Champagne on Sept. 26, Montreal-based Metro said. Jean-Michel Coutu is the grandson of Jean Coutu Group founder Jean Coutu. Metro [acquired the Quebec drug chain](#) in a \$4.5 billion deal that was announced in October 2017 and closed in May 2018. The agreement added about 420 Jean Coutu drugstores to Metro’s approximately 260 retail pharmacies under the Brunet, Metro Pharmacy and Drug Basics banners.

“As a pharmacist and a business executive who has worked in the United States and Canada, he has deep knowledge of the industry, our operations and our opportunities,” Metro stated. “Mr. Coutu will continue to execute our strategy and business plans, which have allowed Metro to remain the leader in pharmacy in Quebec through our Jean Coutu and Brunet banners while supporting the success of the pharmacists owners affiliated to our banners.”

Health Canada approves COVID-19 booster dose for kids 5 to 11

Health Canada has approved Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine as a booster dose for children aged 5 to 11, [says CBC](#). Canada's chief public health officer Dr. Theresa Tam said August 19 that getting vaccines up to date ahead of the fall is a “top priority.” “This booster dose provides a great option to restore protection for this age group, especially for those who are at high risk for illness,” she said. The 10-microgram booster dose can be given at least 6 months after completing a primary series of a COVID-19 vaccine, Tam said.

Moderna to supply 12 million doses of its Omicron-targeted COVID-19 vaccine to Canada

Moderna Inc. will supply 12 million doses of its COVID-19 shot adapted to target the Omicron variant of the coronavirus to Canada, the company said August 22, [according to Reuters](#). The Canadian government had entered into a supply deal with the company last year for supply of its COVID-19 vaccine for 2022 and 2023, with the contract allowing access to new vaccine adaptations. Moderna and Canada have agreed to convert 6 million doses of the company's COVID-19 vaccine, which targets the original virus, to an Omicron-containing bivalent vaccine. Canada will also purchase an additional 4.5 million doses of the Omicron-containing candidate and is moving forward the scheduled delivery of 1.5 million doses of the bivalent vaccine candidate from 2023 to 2022. While existing COVID-19 vaccines continue to provide protection against hospitalization and death, vaccine effectiveness has taken a hit as the virus has evolved.

International

US: Frustrated pharmacists are opting out of the insurance system, saving some customers hundreds of dollars a month

Freedom Pharmacy, owned by Nate Hux, is one of a small but growing number of “cash” or “self-pay” pharmacies, sometimes able to save customers hundreds of dollars on a single medication, [says NBC](#). As patients struggle with rising prescription drug prices and insurance deductibles, everyone from [members of Congress](#) to entrepreneurs like [Mark Cuban](#) and small-business owners such as Hux are trying to

lower drug costs. By opting out of the insurance system altogether, Hux and other cash pharmacy owners are able to avoid many of the fees and rules that inflate medication prices. Consumers say they are reaping the benefits. While 91% of prescriptions in the US are filled through insurance, according to the health-care data analytics and consulting firm Avalere Health, pharmacists like Hux are betting that the savings and service they can offer outside that system will draw enough customers to make their experiments a success.

US: How pharmacy work stopped being so great

If any group of workers might have expected their pay to rise last year, it would arguably have been pharmacists. With many pharmacies dispensing COVID-19 tests and vaccines while filling hundreds of prescriptions each day, working as a pharmacist became a sleep-deprived, lunch-skipping frenzy — one in which ornery customers did not hesitate to vent their frustrations over the inevitable backups and bottlenecks. Yet pay for pharmacists, [reports the New York Times](#), who typically spend 6 or 7 years after high school working toward their professional degree, fell nearly 5% last year after adjusting for inflation. In some cases, the explanation may be a temporary factor, like inflation. But pharmacists illustrate how slow wage growth can point to a longer-term shift that renders once sought-after jobs less rewarding financially and emotionally.

US: APhA reminds policymakers to fix broken PBM marketplace to complement new drug pricing law

The American Pharmacists Association (APhA) [is pleased](#) that the *Inflation Reduction Act* aims to lower health-care costs for seniors by eliminating all out-of-pocket costs for Medicare vaccines starting next year, capping insulin copays at \$35 for Part D and Medicare Plans and capping out-of-pocket drug costs for seniors at \$2,000 a year starting in 2025. However, a major area not addressed in the new law that continues to drive up prescription drug prices paid by plan sponsors and patients is the uncompetitive and deceptive trade practices of large, vertically merged pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) that target patients with chronic conditions and force them to use PBM-owned specialty, mail order and network pharmacies. “APhA is very pleased that the new law will help to improve seniors’ access to vaccinations for preventable diseases and lowers their out-of-pocket prescription drug costs at the pharmacy. Now, Congress needs to complete its work by ensuring that pharmacy doors remain open and address the largely unregulated and broken PBM marketplace,” says Ilisa BG Bernstein, interim executive vice president and CEO of APhA.

US: Small pharmacies report trouble stocking Adderall

Nearly two-thirds of community pharmacies had trouble ordering the popular

attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder drug Adderall at the end of July and beginning of August, at a time when demand is at all-time highs, [says Bloomberg News](#). The National Community Pharmacists Association (NCPHA) surveyed store owners and managers about their experiences purchasing brand and generic Adderall between July 25 and August 5. Of the 358 who responded, 64% said that the medicines were on back order, the group said. Teva Pharmaceutical, the biggest seller of Adderall in the US, said at the end of July it had been experiencing “supply disruptions” of the drug. The company has said it expects the situation to be fixed within the coming weeks.

US: Websites selling unapproved abortion pills are booming

A murky online market for abortion pills is thriving as some US states tighten abortion restrictions, [the Wall Street Journal reports](#) (subscriber access). Dozens of websites state they ship abortion drugs anywhere in the US without a prescription, which violates US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) rules. Most sites do not clearly state who operates them or where they get the pills. The operator of one website said demand for abortion pills has surged since the US Supreme Court removed constitutional protection for abortion in June. The sites, some registered overseas, are distinct from US-based telehealth operators that prescribe and sometimes ship abortion pills to patients in states that allow abortion.

In Depth

What we know about why some kids are missing routine vaccinations

Some children across the country have fallen behind on their routine immunizations during the COVID-19 pandemic, with vaccination rates dropping off by several percentage points in some provinces. Pediatricians and other health officials say the decrease in routine immunizations is concerning as cases of polio—a vaccine-preventable disease—emerge in other parts of the world. Some experts say there could be several reasons why someone isn’t vaccinated, but don’t think hesitancy is the main culprit. Those who [spoke to CBC News](#) suspect school closures during the pandemic, public health resources and staff reallocated, and a greater focus on COVID-19 vaccines may be behind the dip.

Worth Repeating

“We are substituting where appropriate and collaborating with prescribers to seek alternatives. Most of this goes on in the background without patient’s knowledge as to reduce unnecessary stress.” –from a [Twitter thread](#) by NL pharmacist Kara O’Keefe

(@kara_okeefe), reminding Canadians that pharmacists currently manage and prevent shortages on a daily basis on dozens of medications, not just the ones making the news.

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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