

**From:** Canadian Pharmacists Association <advocacy@pharmacists.ca>  
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# The Weekly

Bringing the world of pharmacy together

**July 27, 2022**

**CPhA**

*Pharmacy Workforce Wellness initiative: progress update*

The [Pharmacy Workforce Wellness](#) Steering Committee recently met to review its terms of reference and to provide input on priorities. Chaired by Janet Cooper from the Association of Faculties of Pharmacy of Canada and comprised of representatives from 4 provincial pharmacy associations and 3 corporate pharmacy groups, the committee will provide guidance to CPhA in workforce planning activities and wellness and mental health. In addition, the New Brunswick workforce planning study is underway with the support of Health Intelligence—a consultancy group that specializes in health workforce planning. This study will be supported by a New Brunswick–specific advisory group and will also receive input from the Steering Committee to ensure a pan-Canadian lens. A separate wellness taskforce will also be established to incorporate a front-line pharmacist perspective within the overall initiative. “Pharmacy teams in all settings have remained dedicated to supporting Canada’s health-care system, but it’s clear we need more support and resources as we continue to be there for our patients,” said Danielle Paes, CPhA’s CPO. “The need to address the health care crisis we are currently facing and assist our health workers across the board has

never been more evident. CPhA looks forward to continuing its efforts to support a healthy and sustainable workforce.”

### ***Updated Resource Round-Up: Childhood vaccination***

Whether you're administering vaccines in your pharmacy or helping parents and kids understand the benefits of getting vaccinated, there's lots of information to wade through. Our [updated round-up](#) of helpful resources includes a [Caregiver Checklist](#)—produced in collaboration with Children's Healthcare Canada, Solutions for Kids in Pain (SKIP) and medSask—to help make the experience easier for the child, parent and immunizer.

### ***Baby formula shortage: Resources for pharmacy professionals***

CPhA continues to participate in weekly Health Canada working group discussions related to the ongoing hypoallergenic infant formula shortage. While production resumed in early July at the Abbott manufacturing facility in Michigan, Health Canada continues to work with manufacturers to make sure supply is maintained until the situation stabilizes. The shortage has become highly distressing for certain families, and they are turning to pharmacists to find supply. Pharmacists should be prepared to answer questions and know how to access hypoallergenic formula so that parents are not turned away. CPhA continues to update its [resource web page](#) with information and resources to help support pharmacy professionals during the shortage. Recent updates include an updated [list of distributors](#) and an updated [resource document](#) with estimated timing of upcoming formula shipments, UPC and other product information.

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## **Provincial**

### ***Ontario pharmacists say plan to let them prescribe drugs doesn't go far enough***

Starting next year, pharmacists in Ontario will be able to assess and prescribe medication for minor ailments, but some are calling on the province to expand that list and make the changes sooner to alleviate pressures on the health-care system. Justin Bates, the CEO of the Ontario Pharmacists Association, [told CBC](#) that the changes are a good first step, but he would like to see more services added. “We need to expand it. Ontario is taking a very cautious approach with only 13 conditions,” Bates said. “There are provinces that allow pharmacists to prescribe for all medications except for narcotics and controlled substances.” While pharmacists welcome the news, they say more can be done to add capacity to a system that's already under strain. Since the onset of the pandemic, pharmacists have performed COVID-19 testing and administered vaccines. Kyro Maseh, owner of Lawlor Pharmacy in Toronto, said while he is glad to see the changes, they are set to start too late. “We need this now,” Maseh

said.

***‘Never seen it this bad’: Cold and flu medicine shortage leaves Ottawa pharmacy shelves bare***

If you’re wondering about levels of illness in the city of Ottawa right now, look no further than pharmacy store shelves, which, in some cases, are cleaned out of all cold and flu remedies, as a surge in COVID-19 infections continues. Across the capital, bare shelves are a common sight at pharmacies with cold and flu medication in high demand but in short supply across the country, [CTV reports](#). “We’re not only seeing an increase in demand but some disruptions to supply,” said Jen Belcher from the Ontario Pharmacists Association. What’s concerning is we don’t really have a timeline for when a lot of these products will be back and we know a lot of people turn to them when they’re feeling unwell to help them be more comfortable when you have a cold, a flu, or COVID-19,” Belcher added. “I’ve never seen it this bad,” said Andrew Hanna, a compounding pharmacist and the owner of Pharmasave Avalon in Orleans. In a statement, Shoppers Drug Mart said supply issues and the increase in demand “has meant that at times, stores may be waiting longer for their next shipment to arrive.” In the meantime, Hanna has been compounding medication, which is essentially creating alternatives in-house. “We’re just playing it by ear, and if we can compound something to help the public, then we’re here for them.”

***Collaboration between Îles de la Madeleine pharmacies helps manage drug shortages***

Pharmacies on Quebec’s Îles de la Madeleine are maintaining their services through collaboration with each other despite the occasional delays related to air transport, according to pharmacists Marc-André Lapierre and Geneviève Lévesque. Although Lapierre and Lévesque note that drug supply delays have increased recently, the situation is not alarming and is being managed, [CFIM Radio reports](#) (original article in French). Lapierre, who operates under the Proxim banner, said the supply is more difficult for drugs that must be ordered in smaller quantities. However, the 2 pharmacists said they are helping each other and collaborating with government and the pharmacy at Archipelago Hospital so that long-term solutions can be implemented.

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## National

***Pfizer files new drug submission for omicron-adapted bivalent vaccine candidate***

On July 25, Pfizer Canada and BioNTech [filed a New Drug Submission \(NDS\)](#) with Health Canada for an Omicron-adapted bivalent COVID-19 vaccine candidate, based on the BA.1 sub-lineage, to be administered as a booster dose in individuals 12 years of age and older. This application follows guidance from Health Canada to work

towards the introduction of an Omicron-adapted bivalent vaccine candidate to address the continued evolution of the COVID-19 virus. The safety and efficacy of this NDS is still under investigation and market authorization has not yet been obtained.

***The younger their child, the less likely parents will want them to get COVID-19 vaccine, survey finds***

The younger their children, the less likely it is that Canadian parents want them vaccinated against COVID-19, according to research led by the University of Alberta. In a [study published this month](#) in the journal *Preventive Medicine*, 42% of Canadian parents surveyed said they planned to vaccinate children between the ages of 6 months and 23 months. But the older the child, the more likely parents were to say they planned to get them vaccinated. For children aged 2 to 4, 45% of parents intended to immunize their child, versus 56% for children aged 5 to 11. The remaining respondents for each age category either didn't intend to immunize their children or were undecided. The data was gathered during an online survey last October and November. The 1129 parents who responded were selected from a panel of more than 400 000 Canadians from polling firm Leger. The reported intentions of parents for kids aged 5 to 11 have been reflected in actual vaccinations—as of July 17, [56% of 5- to 11-year-olds](#) had received at least 1 dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

***More Canadian doctors should consider prescribing pharmaceutical alternatives to street drugs, minister says***

Canada's minister of mental health and addictions says more doctors across the country should be willing to prescribe a safer supply of drugs to reduce overdoses instead of fearing they will face barriers from their regulatory colleges, [according to CBC](#). Dr. Carolyn Bennett said a guidance document by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia could be very helpful in other provinces and territories. “We are, I think, a bit limited at the moment, frankly, because of some of the approaches of the colleges of physicians and surgeons across the country,” Bennett told a news conference July 20. “Physicians have felt that they would not be able to do this without being investigated by [their] college, unfortunately.” The BC college has said physicians who prescribe pharmaceutical-grade alternatives to street drugs as part of a comprehensive treatment plan or a stand-alone harm reduction strategy could [better support patients](#) and reduce their risk of overdose and death. The practice is based on a policy directive developed last July by the BC ministries of health and mental health and addictions as part of an urgent response to the overdose crisis.

***Rise People expands into online pharmacy with partnership with Pocketpills***

Rise People has partnered with Pocketpills to expand its health care offerings into online pharmacy, [according to a news release](#). The first of its kind in Canada, this partnership will improve the pharmacy workflow, making pharmacists easily

accessible to patients via phone, text, or email—and offer significant drug savings and higher coverage for employees, with overall lower costs than traditional pharmacies. Pocketchills is a part of the Rise Health offering which was launched earlier this year to bring affordable group health plans to Canadian businesses. Along with Pocketchills' convenient online pharmacy, Rise Health offers group health plans and services at a reduced cost. "We're excited to bring even more convenience and affordable health plans to Canadians across the country," said Faiz Abdulla, the CEO of Rise People. "Adding an online pharmacy is a natural extension, providing free doorstep delivery of medication and virtual access to pharmacists."

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## International

### *US: CVS seeks verification on drugs with possible abortion use*

CVS Health is asking pharmacists in some states to verify that a few of the prescriptions they provide will not be used to end a pregnancy, [the Associated Press reports](#). Spokesperson Mike DeAngelis said the pharmacy chain recently started doing this for methotrexate and misoprostol—2 drugs used in medication abortions but are also to treat other conditions. He added the policy started the first week in July in Alabama, Arkansas, Idaho, Oklahoma, and Texas. The pharmacy chain's request comes after the US Supreme Court last month overturned *Roe v. Wade*—the 1973 decision that had provided a constitutional right to abortion. The ruling is expected to lead to abortion bans in roughly half the states. DeAngelis said state laws that restrict the dispensing of medications used for abortions have forced the company to start the validations, as some of the laws come with criminal penalties. The chain is asking care providers to help by including their diagnosis on the prescriptions. DeAngelis said CVS Health will still fill prescriptions for miscarriages or ectopic pregnancies, which grow outside the womb and are not viable. "We will continue to focus on delivering care to our patients while complying with state laws and federal guidance that continues to evolve," DeAngelis said.

### *UK: RPS calls for urgent pharmacy workforce plan*

The House of Commons Health Committee has called for a pharmacy workforce plan [in a new report](#) on the recruitment, training and retention of the health care workforce. The report makes a number of recommendations to support recruitment, retention and training, and calls on the government to develop a pharmacy workforce plan to optimize workloads across primary care, reduce pressure on general practice and hospitals, and support integrated care systems. The report also recognizes the potential of pharmacist independent prescribers to support patient care, backed by appropriate supervision, training, and opportunities for professional development. "The report

underlines the urgent need for the government to set out a comprehensive workforce plan for health and care,” said Ravi Sharma, the Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS) Director for England. “I would urge the government and National Health Service (NHS) to listen to the committee’s call for an integrated and funded workforce plan for pharmacy, which ensures that all pharmacists have adequate access to supervision, training, and protected learning time, along with clear structures for professional development.”

### ***Ireland: Pharmacies reach 1 million COVID-19 vaccine milestone***

Irish pharmacies have now administered over 1 million COVID-19 vaccines, the Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU) has [confirmed](#). “Pharmacies across Ireland have proven their immense value to their communities by their participation in the vaccination program,” IPU President Dermot Twomey said. “As experts in community vaccination and trusted health care professionals, pharmacists are committed to helping deliver on the public health agenda to vaccinate people against the COVID-19 virus.” Pharmacies have seen strong levels of interest from the public and are currently vaccinating approximately 2000 individuals per day. “The success of pharmacy involvement in this vaccination campaign underlines the value of the role we can play,” he added. “Our patients want pharmacies to expand the provision of vaccines to other areas—everything from travel vaccines to the chicken pox vaccine should be available in the convenience of local pharmacies. More than 85% of the population lives within 5km of a pharmacy. So, by enabling pharmacies to vaccinate you make it easier and more convenient for people to protect themselves and our wider society.”

### ***Australia: Line ups at pharmacies for winter COVID-19 shots***

In mid-July, 7.4 million Australians became eligible for a COVID-19 booster dose after the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunization expanded the eligibility criteria to those over 30 years of age, [the Australian Pharmacist reports](#). Following the announcement, pharmacists saw a 4-fold increase in COVID-19 vaccinations, jumping from 10 000 to 40 000 vaccines administered per day. With over 8 million community pharmacy-administered doses delivered to date, pharmacists are now providing up to 45% of daily COVID-19 vaccinations, compared to approximately 15 to 20% in October of last year. Victoria-based pharmacist Tony Alexopoulos said that prior to the updated recommendations, around 90% of the pharmacy’s bookings were for influenza vaccines. “At the end of the free influenza vaccine period on July 10, we figured everything was going to die off,” he said. “Now, we’re doing anywhere from 30 to 40 bookings a day for booster shots. We’re doing what we can to accommodate everyone.”

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## In Depth

### *Controlling monkeypox: The time for Canada to act is now*

The World Health Organization has declared monkeypox a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. The good news is monkeypox is still quite isolated relative to the total population. There is still time to knock it back, and there is already an effective vaccine available, though supplies are limited. The bad news is that the window is short—a matter of weeks, not months—to vaccinate the most susceptible and to encourage and support self-isolation for those with symptoms. After that, monkeypox may expand beyond our capacity to control it with the vaccine supply we now have available. The Conversation [examines the issue](#).

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## Worth Repeating

“You’re never *just* anything. You’re never *just* a pharmacy assistant. To somebody, you *are* everything. You *can* be everything.” —Nichole Haley, professional services district manager for Walmart Canada in New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and half of Nova Scotia, where she oversees 23 Walmart pharmacies, [on how she worked](#) her way into leadership roles

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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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