



The Weekly

Bringing the world of pharmacy together

June 29, 2022

CPhA

CPhA: Canadians must have reasonable access to contraceptive medications and abortion services

CPhA has reaffirmed its position to protect reproductive rights and access to abortion [in a statement](#). “While abortion is a safe, common and legal health procedure in Canada, we need to actively uphold this right and continue to work to improve the accessibility of abortion resources and care, which varies significantly across Canada. Pharmacists are front-line health-care providers with an important role to play in providing accessible care in our communities, including in the area of reproductive health and medical abortion,” the statement from May 5, 2022, reads. CPhA has long called for measures to address gaps in care and enhance patient access to abortion services, particularly in rural or remote communities. This includes support for pharmacist dispensing of the medicated abortion drug Mifegymiso and providing equitable, universal access to medical abortion across Canada. CPhA not only believes in the sexual and reproductive rights of Canadians, but that all Canadians must have reasonable access to contraceptive medications and abortion services.

Baby formula shortage: New resources for pharmacy professionals

CPhA continues to participate in multiple weekly Health Canada working group discussions related to the ongoing hypoallergenic infant formula shortage. While shipments of specialized formulas are arriving in Canada to alleviate the effects of the shortage, the coming weeks are

expected to be challenging and its effects could continue until the fall. Health Canada has circulated two additional resources to support pharmacists, including a [list of distributors](#) of hypoallergenic formula by province and a [resource document](#) with additional product and distribution information. Please see [CPhA's resource web page](#) for more information and resources to support pharmacy professionals.

CPO named one of Top 10 Canadian pharmacists to follow on Twitter

Dr. Danielle Paes, CPhA's chief pharmacist officer, was named one of the top 10 Canadian pharmacists whose social media platform provides informative content that adds significant value to #TwitteRx, [according to QID Pharmacist Network](#). The blog says she uses "her platform to shed light on the needs of pharmacists across the country and [her feed](#) emphasizes conversations about topics including equality in the workplace, how to prevent the impacts of systemic racism, and ways to innovate and improve healthcare." QID also noted that Paes highlights the future leaders of the profession—current pharmacy students.

Pharmacy Check-in: Q&As with Kyle Wilby and Roger Tam

We caught up with pharmacists [Kyle Wilby](#) and [Roger Tam](#) this month to talk about how pharmacists can provide and advocate for more inclusive care for the LGBT2SQ+ community. While Pride Month is a great time for pharmacy professionals to learn about allyship and inclusion, these actions must carry forward throughout the year. Check out our updated [Resource Round-up](#) to help you provide LGBT2SQ+ patients with accessible, gender-affirming and inclusive care in our communities. Stay tuned for more Pharmacy Check-in profiles!

Highlights from the Canadian Pharmacy Conference 2022

Inspiring keynote speakers, thought-provoking perspectives from panellists, inspirational award winners and the opportunity for more than 250 pharmacy professionals from across Canada to come together to learn, connect and build the future of pharmacy together truly made the Canadian Pharmacy Conference 2022: Pharmacy Rising an event to remember. Whether you were able to join us or not, [check out](#) the recently uploaded highlight reel and photo gallery from the event.

Pharmacy on the front lines

Heroes behind the scenes: How pharmacists have been crucial to the health-care system during the pandemic

Though they rarely appeared in national headlines during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, pharmacists played many roles on the front lines. From providing COVID-19 vaccinations and testing, to being among the most accessible health-care providers, pharmacists continue to be pillars for pandemic support, [the Ubyyssey says](#). When the first public health orders went out, many health-care services closed their doors, including family doctor offices. Fear of contracting COVID-19 left many Canadians avoiding hospitals and other high-risk areas—leaving their local pharmacies as the most accessible option for health support. "Pharmacists

are always there, all the pharmacies stayed open and they stepped up to support the health care system,” third-year PharmD student Grace Li said. But the work of pharmacists to support their communities took its toll. Studies have revealed that pharmacists reported higher levels of burnout compared to before the pandemic, and experts are calling for improved support services, more dialogue and better mental health resources. According to PharmD student Aneet Grewal, the pandemic was especially stressful for pharmacists, who not only had to continue with their regular duties but had additional ones related to the pandemic, like administering vaccines and providing information to the community. Initiatives are mounting to support pharmacists and address the wellness issues made clear by the COVID-19 pandemic, such as CPhA’s Pharmacy Workforce Wellness initiative to support pharmacist mental health, which launched in January.

Provincial

Alberta’s first walk-in health clinic led by pharmacists opens

Loblaws has partnered with the University of Alberta to offer the province’s first pharmacist-led health clinic as part of a pilot project in Lethbridge, [CTV reports](#). “For those patients who either no longer have a family physician or for those patients who are having a difficult time accessing their family physician [in a] timely fashion, we will be here to help assess as well as provide medication and provide follow up opportunities for those patients,” said Justin Jensen, pharmacy manager at the Real Canadian Superstore. Jeff Leger, the head of pharmacy for Loblaws and president of Shoppers Drug Mart, said pharmacists in Alberta are uniquely positioned to relieve some of the burden on the province’s health-care system. “Pharmacists are able to do quite a number of things to help people with either minor illnesses or pain or chronic conditions, so that’s what we’re doing. We’re actually going to offer primary care through the pharmacists,” Leger said. Loblaws has provided a \$500,000 grant to the University of Alberta to support research and teaching. “Our researchers will be using that funding to evaluate each piece of it and also we’ll have students coming to the clinic to be trained and to provide care to patients,” said Christine Hughes, interim dean of the Faculty of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences.

PEI pharmacists ready and able to offer more publicly funded services

The hottest ticket in PEI these days isn’t for a concert or a sports event, but rather to see a doctor at a walk-in clinic, especially for the increasing number of people without a family physician, [CBC reports](#). The PEI Pharmacists Association said many people seeking treatment at walk-in clinics are there for issues that don’t necessarily require a doctor’s visit, and they should talk to a pharmacist instead. The association said pharmacists can help with a number of ailments, including hay fever and allergies, emergency contraception, premenstrual pain, minor sleep disorders, nicotine dependence, and yeast and urinary tract infections. Erin MacKenzie, the association’s executive director, also said public funding of pharmacy services could help. “Pharmacists are ready and able to offer even more services under a publicly funded model,” she said. “Some of the non-urgent patients could be managed by their pharmacists, reserving more complex and urgent cases for our expert physicians.”

Pharmacy rewards in NS staying for now as other provinces vote to ban practice

The Nova Scotia College of Pharmacists has no plans to ban consumers from collecting loyalty points or other incentives with their pharmacy purchases, [CBC reports](#). “We don’t see a need to take any additional action,” said Beverly Zwicker, the college’s registrar. “There isn’t anything that would indicate that the public is at risk from this current practice.” Last week, the New Brunswick College of Pharmacists [voted to ban](#) any form of consumer enticements connected to prescription purchases, including cash, prizes, coupons or loyalty points. The ban also applies to pharmacy services such as prescription refills or vaccines. New Brunswick is the seventh province in Canada to adopt the policy, following Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, Quebec, Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia. But Zwicker said Nova Scotia’s pharmacists addressed this ethical question 9 years ago and came to a different conclusion. She said there are “competing public interests at play,” including “the tangible benefits that people realize from rewards, as well as the value of those rewards programs in encouraging patients to remain at one pharmacy.” Zwicker said seeing the same pharmacist regularly allows for closer monitoring of a patient’s health and more chances to flag possible drug interactions.

National

Canada secures opioid damages settlement with Purdue Pharma

On June 29, Canada secured a \$150 million settlement with Purdue Pharma (Canada) in a proposed class action. This is the largest settlement of a governmental health claim in Canadian history, [according to a news release from the Ontario Attorney General](#). The opioid crisis continues to be devastating for people across the country in terms of lives lost, families torn apart and the impact on our health-care professionals. The lawsuit was launched in 2018 on behalf of all provincial, territorial and federal governments to recover government health care and other direct costs incurred due to opioid-related disease, injury or illness. The claim alleges that opioid manufacturers and distributors engaged in deceptive marketing practices to increase sales which has led to increased addiction and overdoses.

Canada’s COVID-19 pandemic response compares well with other countries, study finds

Canada handled the first 2 years of the COVID-19 pandemic and weathered the ensuing upheaval better than several other nations with comparable health-care and economic infrastructure, [the Canadian Press reports](#). A study published in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* credits Canada’s strong performance to restrictive and persistent public health measures as well as a successful vaccination campaign. The research compares data from February 2020 to February 2022 in 11 countries dubbed the G10 due to the late inclusion of 1 subject—Canada, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States. “If you look at Canada compared to the G10, the differences are enormous,” study co-author Dr. Fahad Razak said. “If you look at our vaccination rate, we had the highest in the entire G10.” We had one of the lowest rates of people infected and one of the lowest rates of people dying. Canada’s rate of COVID-19–related deaths was 919 per million, second lowest behind Japan. All other countries were over 1000 per million.

Razak said at least 70 000 more Canadians would have died during the first 2 years of the pandemic if Canada had the same death rates as the US—the country with the highest cumulative number of COVID-19–related deaths.

SDM offers financial support to spur pharmacy tech professional registration

Students enrolled in both Anderson College of Health, Business and Technology and Westervelt's Pharmacy Technician program will have the opportunity to enroll in the Technician Licensing Assistance Program (TLAP) developed by Central Pharmacy Services (CPS)—a division of Shoppers Drug Mart (SDM). TLAP is designed to assist and financially support pharmacy assistants working at Central Pharmacy Services to become fully registered as pharmacy technicians. "Pharmacy technicians have been vital to our ability to support our partner pharmacies in the delivery of exceptional patient care," Matt Koehler, senior operations director of CPS, said [in a news release](#). "We are grateful for the opportunity to reduce financial barriers and support individuals wishing to join this great profession." TLAP funding covers a 100% reimbursement for registration and licensing fees and an 80% reimbursement of pharmacy technician program costs up to a maximum of \$12,000. Eligible Anderson College and Westervelt College students must be entitled to study/work in Canada, be registered as a pharmacy technician student, and be employed full-time or part-time (practicum training) within a CPS.

International

US: ASHP calls for patients' rights to access reproductive health services

The American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) [approved a new policy](#) on June 28 asserting patients' rights to access comprehensive reproductive health-care services, including care for pre-conception, conception, post-conception and termination of pregnancies. The policy also affirms that health-care workers should be free to provide needed care guided by their individual beliefs without fear of retribution. The "Access to Reproductive Health Services" policy also addresses the long-standing disparities in access to and outcomes from reproductive health services in the US, particularly for racial and ethnic minorities. These include disparities in contraceptive use, reproductive cancers, preterm deliveries, and maternal morbidity and mortality.

US: Walgreens reaches US\$105 million settlement with shareholders

Walgreens Boots Alliance agreed to pay US\$105 million to settle a long-running class action lawsuit, accusing it of misleading shareholders about how rising generic drug prices and reimbursement pressures would hurt its pharmacy business, [Reuters reports](#). The preliminary all-cash settlement was filed in a federal court in Chicago following 6 months of mediation and requires a judge's approval. Walgreens denied wrongdoing, but settled to avoid the uncertainty, burden and cost of further litigation, the settlement papers show. Shareholders said Walgreens inflated its stock price in 2014 by concealing bad news about drug prices and reimbursement rates so investors could focus on its then-pending merger with Switzerland's Alliance Boots. The

challenged statements concerned Walgreens' outlook for its 2016 fiscal year—the first full year after the Illinois-based company expected to complete the merger. Walgreen, as the company was then known, lowered its forecast for that year on August 6, 2014. The merger closed at the end of 2014, and the lawsuit was filed in April 2015. A related shareholder lawsuit accusing Walgreen officers and directors of poor oversight has been on hold pending a resolution of the class action.

US: Walgreens shelves pharmacy Boots' sale amid market turmoil

Walgreens Boots Alliance has [scrapped the plan](#) to sell its UK pharmacy chain, Boots, saying no third party was able to make an adequate offer due to the turmoil in global financial markets. The move to call off the sale comes as private equity bidders Apollo Global and TDR faced headwinds in raising financing for the deal, as banks were wary of underwriting large chunks of the financing due to tough market conditions.

US: CVS, Walgreens ration morning-after pills

Some major US pharmacies are rationing sales of morning-after contraceptive pills amid a surge in demand after the US Supreme Court's overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, [according to the New York Post](#). Outlets such as CVS and Walgreens are limiting purchases of their in-store supplies. Commonly known as Plan B, the pills are taken to prevent pregnancy soon after unprotected sex, either by preventing ovulation or stopping eggs from attaching to the uterus. A CVS spokesperson said the rations are intended to ensure "equitable access" to the contraceptives, which are available without a prescription. CVS noted it still has an ample supply of prescribed morning-after medications, which are typically used to terminate pregnancies up to 10 weeks.

US: Abortion pills take the spotlight as states impose abortion bans

Abortion pills, already used in more than half of recent abortions in the US, are becoming even more sought-after in the aftermath of *Roe v. Wade* being overturned, and they will likely be at the centre of the legal battles that are expected to unfold as about half the states ban abortion and others take steps to increase access, [the New York Times explains](#). In the hours after the US Supreme Court released its decision overturning the legal right to abortion in the United States, nearly 100 requests for appointments flowed into Just the Pill—a non-profit organization that arranges for patients to obtain abortion pills in several states. Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Xavier Becerra conceded [in an interview with the Associated Press](#) that there's "no magic bullet" to ensure abortion access. For now, he's pledging that "if there is something we can do, we will find it and we will do it at HHS." Becerra said the Biden administration would work to ensure that medication abortions remain available, patient privacy is preserved, and family planning care like emergency contraceptives is protected.

Australia: Push for students to keep vaccinating

Pharmacy students and interns were an "untapped resource" before the pandemic hit and pharmacists say they should be allowed to vaccinate people on a permanent basis, [the Australian Associated Press reports](#). Fourth-year students and interns were called on to bolster

Victoria's COVID-19 vaccination efforts as part of a “surge workforce” under the state governments public health emergency orders. Earlier this month, their involvement was extended to administering flu shots under supervision. But when the orders expire—potentially in July for COVID-19 and in September for flu—they will not be allowed to continue administering vaccines. The Pharmacy Guild of Australia (PGA) agrees students and interns who have done the required training should continue vaccinating people under supervision. Not only would this help the already stretched health system, but using students and interns to their full potential could improve retention rates, according to Anthony Tassone, PGA’s Victorian branch president. “If pharmacy students and intern pharmacists are seen to have been a safe and appropriate resource as part of temporary emergency arrangements during the COVID pandemic, we do not see any reason for it to not be permanently allowed,” he said. “Patients stand to be the greatest beneficiaries.”

New Zealand: Staffing shortages push pharmacies to cut hours

Pharmacies in New Zealand are cutting hours and considering closing their doors because they’re struggling to find pharmacists, [Stuff reports](#). It’s a [national problem](#) and pharmacist Steve Jo is worried that unless things change, young people won’t see a future for themselves in the profession—especially not in New Zealand. He opens his pharmacies to students and interns but says many want to swap industries or head abroad as soon as they finish their qualifications. “They can see how hard we work and how much we get paid, and it just doesn’t make sense to them,” Jo said. Andrew Gaudin, chief executive of the Pharmacy Guild of New Zealand, said regional pharmacist shortages are now being felt nationwide and have been exacerbated by the pandemic. On top of normal services, Gaudin said pharmacies have taken on COVID-19 vaccinations and rapid antigen test supervision and distribution, while dealing with reduced staffing levels because of isolation requirements. “The guild have been raising the issue of pharmacist shortages with the government and Ministry of Health officials for many years,” he said.

In Depth

‘We are behind a lot’: How provinces are catching kids up on routine vaccines

Between school closures, personnel shortages and public health units stretched thin, Canadian children and teenagers are lagging behind on routine shots that prevent various cancers and sexually transmitted diseases. Public health units are now hustling to catch them up—but there’s still work to be done, with multiple provinces reporting insufficient vaccine uptake. In this [CBC report](#), experts say improving access to routine vaccines will make all the difference.

Worth Repeating

“Abortion care affirms the dignity and autonomy of patients and translates into not only physical and mental health but also opportunity for education, employment, safety from violence, and parenting wanted children. Providers and policymakers in Canada can and must respond to US

abortion bans by expanding access to care here.” —Dr. Martha Paynter, a registered nurse providing abortion and postpartum care, [writes in the Conversation](#) that Canada can respond to US abortion bans by improving access to abortion care here

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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