



Canadian  
Pharmacists  
Association

Association des  
pharmaciens  
du Canada

# The Weekly

Bringing the world of pharmacy together

## November 2, 2022

### CPhA

#### ***CPhA attends national roundtable on shortage of children's analgesics***

CPhA participated in a November 2 roundtable with Minister of Health Jean-Yves Duclos and Deputy Minister Stephen Lucas on the ongoing shortage of pediatric analgesics. The meeting convened representatives from stakeholders across the supply chain including manufacturers, distributors, pharmacies and pediatric health groups. CPhA shared how pharmacy teams are supporting parents and caregivers and the impact this shortage is having on pharmacists' workload during an already extremely busy time. CPhA continues to update and support pharmacy professionals with new information and resources, including a recent [Q&A resource](#) to help pharmacy teams answer questions from patients.

#### ***Tools and resources to help pharmacists this flu season***

Pharmacists play a vital public health role, administering nearly half of all flu shots delivered across Canada each year. The results of CPhA's [annual national flu survey](#) point to a possibly concerning decrease in flu shot demand compared to the last 2 years, while pharmacy continues to grow as the top location where Canadians want to get a flu shot. To help pharmacists safely

and effectively provide influenza immunizations to patients, CPhA's [influenza webpage](#) has been updated with tools and resources for the 2022–23 flu season. These resources include a [patient information infographic](#) on the common cold and influenza, [answers to common questions](#) about the flu shot, and the latest clinical information in the [CPS “Influenza” chapter](#). The webpage and resources are also available in [French](#).

### ***November is Diabetes Awareness Month***

Currently, 1 in 3 Canadians has diabetes or prediabetes. As the most accessible health-care provider, pharmacists have an important role to play in prevention, screening and management of diabetes. Throughout Diabetes Awareness Month, join CPhA in raising awareness about the condition and the important role pharmacists play on the diabetes care team. Check out our [webpage](#) for a round-up of information and resources related to diabetes care, including a series of Q&As with Certified Diabetes Educators, patient information infographics on topics ranging from low blood sugar to foot care, and videos about how pharmacists can help patients manage diabetes.

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## **Pharmacy on the front lines**

### ***Time to roll up your sleeve again: Newfoundland and Labrador pharmacist warns that this flu season may be ‘severe’***

The weather starting to get colder, means hot chocolate and warm mittens, but it also heralds the arrival of cold and flu season. “Therefore, the call to action is to once again roll up your sleeves and everyone get a flu shot and their COVID fall/winter booster,” said Keith Bailey, pharmacist and owner of 2 Shoppers Drug Mart locations in St. John’s. Those in the medical field are predicting a worse-than-usual cold and flu season for this year. “In the past 2 years, we have seen low rates of flu in Newfoundland and Labrador, largely in part to the amazing work of every resident to maintain social distancing, wash hands, wear masks, work from home and stay home if not well,” Bailey [told SaltWire](#). But with restrictions lifted for the most part, and people back at work and normal social activities, the risk has gone up. “The fear is that we may slip back into a severe flu season with many cases,” Bailey said. “There may have been some natural waning in your immune protection as well as very few of us have been exposed to flu in the past 2 years. Of course, COVID-19 is a double

whammy, as it also affects the lungs, and getting both together could be very serious.”

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## Provincial

### ***More flu shots expected as BC pharmacists handle record number of vaccinations***

A record number of vaccinations have been given out by BC pharmacists this year, and it's only October, [CHEK News reports](#). The increase is partly because people are getting 2 shots—one for influenza and a COVID-19 booster. “Just this past week, pharmacies alone in BC administered more than 330,000 flu and COVID shots, combined,” said Angie Gaddy, spokesperson for the BC Pharmacy Association. “We’ve seen record numbers of vaccinations being done at pharmacies.” It’s also the first time in the province that flu shots are free for anyone 6 years and under. Pharmacists across the province are trying to keep up with demand, but say they’re limited by staffing, but more so, supply. “We have been going 110%,” said Linda Gutenberg, pharmacy manager at Heart Pharmacy Langford. “Everyone wants the vaccine in the first 2 weeks and it’s just not possible.” Gutenberg’s advice is to have patience. The flu vaccines will come, with pharmacists administering them well into December, she said.

### ***First week of Pharmacy Plus PEI a huge success***

More than 1200 Islanders accessed health-care services at 48 community pharmacies during the first week of the province’s new Pharmacy Plus program—a huge success, [according to a news release](#). During the week of October 18 to 26, 884 Islanders—the majority of those accessing care—received a prescription renewal, while the other 317 patients received assessments for common ailments including urinary tract infections, cold sores, hay fever and allergies, skin infections, and heartburn. The program was launched by the provincial government on October 18, giving Islanders the ability to visit community pharmacies for 32 common ailments and prescription renewals, free of charge. “This program is part of our overall plan to alleviate pressure on other areas of the system, such as physician offices, walk-in clinics, and emergency departments,” said Health and Wellness Minister Ernie

Hudson. “Based on what we’re seeing in the first week, its proving to be successful in accomplishing that.”

### ***Pathway launches its medical cannabis system at Sunshine Drugs in Ontario***

Pathway Health Corp. is set to use its medical cannabis platform to train some pharmacists in Ontario so they can assess patients better when considering medical cannabis. On October 31, the company [announced the agreement](#) with Sunshine Drugs—a family of 15 community-based pharmacies located primarily in Southwestern Ontario. The agreement implements Pathway’s Medical Cannabis Management System (MCMS), which gives access to the accredited continuing education course “Cannabis and Patient Care for Pharmacists” and trains pharmacists in patient assessment and prescription reviews. The course meets the requirements of the Canadian Council on Continuing Education in Pharmacy and the Ontario College of Pharmacists. The company’s next step will be to implement the MCMS in various Sunshine Pharmacy locations across Canada. The program was designed increase access to medical cannabis care at pharmacies and aims to enable pharmacists to provide medical cannabis assessments for eligible patients.

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## **National**

### ***The fight to get ‘talking prescriptions’ at pharmacy chains across Canada***

Dean Steacy has been fighting for 5 years to get his local Rexall drugstore to adopt “talking prescription label” technology. The Gatineau, Quebec, man has been blind for 17 years, takes insulin and up to 10 pills daily for diabetes and related conditions. He sometimes has to rely on others to help him manage his medications. The lack of independence “kind of takes away part of your dignity,” he [told CBC’s Go Public](#). And, because he can’t see his prescriptions, he’s always at risk of taking too much, too little, or even the wrong medications. That’s where ScripTalk comes in—a technology that uses a radio frequency chip attached to the bottom of a prescription bottle. It has the same information as a prescription label, including dosage, instructions, warnings and the number of refills, which can be read aloud by a reader or smartphone. It has been available in Canada since 2010 and Steacy has been lobbying Rexall to adopt the technology since 2017. As the battle for wider accessibility

continues, 1.5 million Canadians—who, according to the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, experience sight loss—now face a patchwork of pharmacies offering different access to talking prescriptions. According to disability rights expert and lawyer David Lepofsky, not providing timely and accessible labels is a “glaring violation of human rights codes” across Canada.

### ***Health Canada announces Coalition for Action for Health Workers***

November 1 marked the first meeting of a Coalition for Action for Health Workers—comprised of representatives from key groups, including nurses, doctors, personal support workers, unions, colleges and universities, public health, patients, Indigenous peoples and equity-deserving communities. This group’s advice will inform immediate and longer-term solutions to address significant health workforce challenges, so that all Canadians can access the quality care they need and deserve, [according to a news release from Health Canada](#). “The Government shares the concerns raised by health workers on the state of the health care system, including the impacts that the health workforce crisis is having on their patients’ ability to receive quality care when and where they need it,” the news release stated. “Health workers are the backbone of the health system, and the health workforce is in crisis.” The coalition’s initial priorities will include providing advice on workers’ retention, increasing the supply of health professionals in the country, improving health workforce data, and opportunities to scale new models of care to address key barriers.

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## **International**

### ***US: Walgreens will stop judging its pharmacy staffers by how fast they work***

Walgreens will no longer evaluate its pharmacy staffers based on speed and other metrics amid complaints from pharmacists across the industry that pressure to meet targets like the number of filled prescriptions is leading to dangerous mistakes and staff burnout, [NBC reports](#). Walgreens, the country’s second-largest pharmacy chain, announced October 26 that it is eliminating “task-based metrics” from performance evaluations to allow its pharmacy staffers to “place even greater focus on patient care.” They will now be evaluated “solely on the behaviors that best support patient care and enhance

the patient experience,” Walgreens said in a news release. For years, pharmacists and pharmacy technicians around the country have been sounding the alarm about working conditions and understaffing, which they say increase the potential for mistakes in filling prescriptions. The problems worsened during the coronavirus pandemic, according to many workers, as pharmacies became key locations for COVID-19 testing and vaccinations. The American Pharmacist Association called Walgreens’ announcement “a positive step in the right direction” and encouraged other pharmacies to do the same.

### ***US: Pharmacies are reporting shortages of the widely used antibiotic amoxicillin***

Pharmacies across the United States are reporting shortages of one of the most widely used antibiotics, raising concerns that the medication will be in short supply for the upcoming winter season. Independent pharmacy owners in Kansas, Georgia and New York [confirmed to NBC](#) that supplies of amoxicillin—commonly prescribed to treat a variety of bacterial infections including ear infections, pneumonia and bronchitis—have been dwindling for weeks. In some cases, drug wholesalers are limiting how much of the medication pharmacies can purchase at a time, likely to avoid running out of them. The 3 key amoxicillin manufacturers—Hikma Pharmaceuticals, Sandoz, and Teva Pharmaceutical Industries—are reporting shortages of the antibiotic, according to the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists, which maintains a database of drug shortages. The products affected include chewable tablets, capsules and powder for an oral liquid or “suspension” that is typically prescribed to children. It’s not clear what is causing the shortage or how long it could last.

### ***France: French pharmacists have new vaccination powers***

French health authorities were slow to embrace pharmacy-based vaccination but have now dramatically expanded the role of pharmacists in providing almost all vaccines recommended for the general population, [Vaccines Today reports](#). Trained pharmacists will be permitted to prescribe and administer vaccines against diphtheria, tetanus, polio, pertussis, flu, HPV, measles, mumps, rubella, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, meningococcal A, meningococcal B, pneumococcus, varicella, shingles, yellow fever and rabies. The move is expected to come into force in the first quarter of 2023. It follows a growing trend across Europe since the pandemic, during which pharmacists gained

valuable vaccination experience while the public became accustomed to visiting local pharmacists for vaccines. Although several European countries, including the UK, Ireland and Portugal, have allowed pharmacists to administer a number of vaccinations for more than a decade, France has been hesitant. Until a pilot project allowing pharmacists to provide flu vaccines was rolled out nationwide in 2019, vaccination was provided almost uniquely by medical doctors.

### ***Ireland: Pharmacists welcome call for greater choice in contraceptive care***

The Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU) has [welcomed](#) the call from the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCi) for pharmacists to be able to supply oral contraception without a prescription, which would support women accessing these contraceptive care and services. In an October 25 report, NWCi recommended the use of Irish pharmacists to "help ensure we reach all women and people who menstruate and enable equal access to reproductive healthcare." The IPU has consistently called for increasing access to contraception by allowing pharmacists to supply these medicines following a consultation, without first having to get a prescription from a doctor. "With over 1900 pharmacies nationwide and over 85% of the population living within 5km of their nearest one, pharmacies provide a straightforward and convenient point of access to many treatments and services," said Kathy Maher, community pharmacist and chair of the IPU's Pharmacy Contractors' Committee. "Just as women have the choice over what form of contraception they wish to use, they should also be given the choice of where they can access it."

### ***Australia: NSW pharmacists excluded from monkeypox vaccination plans***

The New South Wales (NSW) government announced on October 20 that it's investing AU\$2 million (CDN\$1.75 million) in vaccination against monkeypox, with the addition of 20 new temporary vaccination clinics. But while community pharmacists in Victoria were recently given the green light to administer the monkeypox vaccine, this will not be the case in NSW. "Pharmacist-immunisers are highly skilled, highly accessible healthcare professionals that have the experience to safely deliver injectable vaccinations," Chelsea Felkai, NSW branch president for the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA), [told the Australian Journal of Pharmacy](#) (subscriber access only). "It is disappointing



that the NSW Government has decided to restrict the administration of the Monkeypox vaccine to state-run clinics.” Felkai added that PSA has long advocated for expanded pharmacist involvement in vaccination administration, pointing to the 11 million COVID-19 vaccines delivered by pharmacists as “evidence that we can do more in this area.”

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## In Depth

### ***What COVID-19 does to the brain***

Neuroscientists are trying to figure out how the COVID-19 virus, SARS-COV-2, is affecting the brain. Many people who have gotten COVID-19 end up having lingering cognitive impairments of some kind, whether that’s brain fog, forgetting vocabulary, difficulty remembering or general sluggishness in trying to think. Dr. Adrian Owen, a professor of neuroscience and imaging at Western University, explains [in a \*Globe and Mail\* podcast](#) what kinds of cognitive issues people face and how it’s impacting them.

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## Worth Repeating

“Don’t feel boxed in by your current professional identity, whether it’s self-imposed or society’s perception of who you are and what you can do.” —Rui Su, co-founder and chief clinical officer at digital health start-up MedMe Health, [on what it was like](#) to transition from working in pharmacy to tech

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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.