



Canadian
Pharmacists
Association

Association des
pharmaciens
du Canada

The Weekly

Bringing the world of pharmacy together

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CPhA

CPhA: Imported kids' pain meds now hitting pharmacy shelves

Federal Health Minister Jean-Yves Duclos said on November 25 that the previously announced 1 million units of imported kids' pain relievers are starting to arrive on pharmacy shelves, while an additional 500 000 units have been ordered and are expected over the next few weeks. A separate shipment of kids' pain relievers from Australia is headed for hospitals and domestic production has ramped up, Duclos added. Parents across Canada have been scrambling to manage their children's fever and pain as rates of respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and influenza skyrocket amid a dire shortage of pediatric acetaminophen and ibuprofen. CPhA [confirmed to the Canadian Press](#) that shipments have started to arrive, and it expects products will be seen on store shelves over into this week. "We're hopeful that this will start to bring some relief to parents and caregivers and help address our immediate needs," Danielle Paes, CPhA's CPO, said in a statement. The emergency imports of medication spread across Canada are not enough to fix the shortage, CPhA noted, so it's important to avoid stockpiling.

CPhA's CPO on fear, frustration and frenzy at the pharmacy

In the latest [CPO Conversations blog](#), CPhA's Chief Pharmacist Officer, Dr. Danielle Paes, addresses some of the challenges pharmacy is currently facing, highlights some of CPhA's efforts to help, and reminds pharmacy teams that they are truly making a difference for their patients and communities. "What we do know is that our patients and health care in Canada could not get through this without pharmacy," she wrote. "They are depending on us, but I also truly believe they recognize and appreciate us as well (even though we may not always feel it)."

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

Join us today from 7:00–8:00 pm ET for the next session in our COVID Conversations webinar series. Our speakers will 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 program has received financial support from Pfizer Canada ULC in the form of an educational grant and is accredited for 1.0 CEU.* [Register here.](#)

Save 30% with our Cyber Monday sale!

Until December 12, save 30% on the following print editions of Canada's authoritative sources for prescribing and managing drug therapy: *CPS: Drug Information*, *CPS: Therapeutic Choices*, *Compendium of Therapeutics for Minor Ailments* (CTMA), and *Compendium of Products for Minor Ailments* (CPMA). [Order here.](#)

Pharmacy on the front lines

Sudbury, ON, pharmacy puts the focus on a healthy diet

A Sudbury, Ontario, pharmacy has taken a different approach to health and wellness, with a focus on healthy foods and habits, [CBC reports](#). Rachelle Rocha opened Seasons Pharmacy and Culinaria in 2019 as an alternative to the pharmacies she had worked in throughout her career. Rocha worked her way up the corporate ladder to director with a large grocery store chain,

supervising more than 100 pharmacies across Ontario. But she said she started to feel like that role held back her relationship with patients, especially when it came to teaching patients about eating well. So, Rocha opened her own pharmacy that would bring the focus back to healthy food. The pharmacy still offers all the drugs and prescriptions available anywhere else, but food is its foundation. The pharmacy sells locally grown and produced foods ranging from fruits and vegetables to locally produced honey and cheese. “We’re trying to curate as close to nature as possible because these are the building blocks for your body’s health,” Rocha said. “You need good quality ingredients grown outside in the sunshine.”

Provincial

Higher demand for flu shots this year in BC; no further doses expected to arrive

The BC Pharmacy Association alerted members last week that flu shots held by distributors are depleted with no further doses expected, but the head of the province’s immunization program said 700 000 doses remain and that should be enough. And if it’s not enough, BC could contact other provinces and see if they have excess supply, Penny Ballem, the province’s executive lead for immunization programs, [told the Times-Colonist](#). In BC, the flu shot is free to anyone 6 months and older through pharmacies, health authority clinics and to a lesser degree family physician offices. “We’re keeping a very close eye on it and if we think that the demand continues . . . and we think we might run out before people have gotten a vaccine that they want, we’ll take steps to try and address that,” Ballem said. The BC Ministry of Health originally ordered 1.8 million flu doses, followed by an extra order of 210 000, Ballem added. About 1.35 million flu shots have already been given this flu season, which was the total for all of last season.

OCP to discuss mandating narcotic safes as SDM rolls them out across ON

Shoppers Drug Mart (SDM) will be rolling out time-delayed narcotic safes in all of its stores and in Loblaw pharmacies across Ontario, [Global News reports](#). Dean Henrico, senior vice president of asset production at Loblaw Companies Ltd., said the safes are already mandated in other provinces and are a “proven

deterrent in the reduction of narcotic thefts.” Time-delayed safes open after a set amount of time when the safe is unlocked rather than right away—a deterrent to thieves looking for a speedy getaway. Toronto Police Inspector Rich Harris said the force has been responding to an “increasing number of pharmacy robberies this year,” adding that there have been more than 110 in 2022, compared to 49 in 2021. In recognition of the alarming rise in reports of pharmacy robberies across the province, the Ontario College of Pharmacists (OCP) [said in a news release](#) that its board of directors will discuss the mandatory use of these safes in all community pharmacists at its December 12 meeting. “The universal implementation of time-delayed safes has proven to be an effective deterrent to pharmacy robberies in other Canadian and American jurisdictions, and the Board will be considering whether a regulatory mandate is in the public interest,” the statement said.

OPA launches new digital health tool to support minor ailments program

The Ontario Pharmacists Association (OPA) has [partnered with](#) MAPflow, a powerful new digital health tool, to support pharmacists when they assess and prescribe for minor ailments in the province starting January 1, 2023. As pharmacists transition to the expanded role, MAPflow’s advanced software platform will help streamline documentation, offering pharmacists a simplified workflow and seamless experience for managing highly confidential patient data. OPA said its investment in the web-based clinical decision-making and implementation support platform provides pharmacists with a comprehensive suite of custom-built applications designed for Ontario’s practice environment. “We’re committed to helping pharmacists increase agility and drive innovation for the future,” said Jennifer Belcher, vice-president of strategic initiatives and member relations. “OPA has invested in MAPflow to successfully prepare pharmacists to make confident, evidence-based decisions while assessing patients for minor ailments.”

QC pharmacists: Changes welcomed, but appointments for patients will require adjustments

Beginning in 2023, Quebec pharmacists will be able to offer consultations and medical follow-ups for people suffering from chronic pain, asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. This week, Quebec’s Treasury Board endorsed an agreement with the Quebec Association of Proprietor Pharmacists (AQPP) to broaden pharmacists’ scope of practice and improve their remuneration,

[Radio-Canada reports](#) (original article in French). Previously, doctors and nurses took care of consultations and follow-ups related to these 3 types of ailments. This is welcome news in the pharmacy community, but it will require some adjustments for patients, pharmacists say. “For the population, I think it is positive. It gives better access to care and better collaboration between professionals,” explained Bertrand Bolduc, president of the Order of Pharmacists of Quebec. According to Bolduc, the new agreement will free up time for general practitioners and provide better follow-up in pharmacies. However, for everything to work properly, patients will have to get used to making appointments at the pharmacy, he said. For Saint-Romuald pharmacist Camille Dupuis-Brousseau, the agreement between Quebec and the AQPP changes little. “As a pharmacist, you are responsible for ensuring the safety and effectiveness of the medications you dispense. We were already doing some follow-ups,” she said.

National

Flu shot uptake below targets, particularly for older adults: survey

Despite the mass availability of the flu shot, the uptake is lower than what’s needed to effectively protect populations, particularly for older adults, according to a new survey from the National Institute on Ageing—a public policy think tank within Toronto Metropolitan University. And it’s a combination of general indifference, lack of convenience and lack of information that is stopping Canadians from getting flu shots in arms, [CTV News reports](#). The study found that only 48% of Canadians reported receiving the flu vaccine in the 2021–2022 flu season, which is far below the 93% at the time who reported getting 2 doses of a COVID-19 vaccine. In addition, 70% of those 65 and older reported being vaccinated against the flu during last year’s flu season, which remains below the 80% goal the Public Health Agency of Canada has outlined as needed to properly protect that population. Older adults were particularly zealous when it came to the COVID-19 vaccine, with 97% receiving 2 doses, and 92% having 3 or more as of last fall, indicating that there is enthusiasm around vaccination, the survey explains.

Measles vaccination rates in Canada have decreased, PHAC says amid global concern

Last week, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) said it shares the concerns raised by international health experts of the renewed risk of measles and other vaccine-preventable diseases among children. In a statement to [Global News](#) on November 24, the agency noted intake of the measles vaccine in Canada has decreased over the past several years, pointing to the COVID-19 pandemic and vaccine hesitancy among some parents as reasons for a current decline in vaccinations. “Canada’s provinces and territories have indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in disruptions, delays and gaps in routine vaccinations for children,” the statement said. There are currently no active cases of measles in the country, but 3 cases have been reported this year, according to the latest report by PHAC. A joint report published on November 23 by the World Health Organization and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that measles is an “imminent” global threat because of declining vaccine coverage and weakened surveillance of the disease during the COVID-19 pandemic.

International

US: Shortages of antivirals, antibiotics compound stress of a rough season for viral illnesses in kids

Shortages of key medications used to treat common childhood illnesses like flu, ear infections and sore throats are adding to the misery of this year’s early and severe respiratory virus season, [CNN reports](#). The cause of these shortages doesn’t seem to be a manufacturing problem, said Michael Ganio, senior director of pharmacy practice and quality for the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists. “It’s just increased demand ahead of schedule and higher than usual,” he said. According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than half of US states have “high” or “very high” respiratory virus activity. Most of that is due to influenza, which hit early and hard this year, but respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is also playing a role. As a result, prescription fills for the antiviral Tamiflu are at a 10-year high for this time of year, according to GoodRx.com, a company that helps people find discounts for prescription drugs. As for the antibiotics amoxicillin and Augmentin—a combination of amoxicillin and clavulanate, an agent that helps guard against antibiotic resistance—it’s not entirely clear why demand is so high. The CDC considers these to be first-line therapies for many common childhood ailments, like ear, sinus and throat infections. Some viral illness, like

influenza, can leave the body more vulnerable to secondary bacterial infections that may need treatment with antibiotics.

Ireland: Over 1000 'safe pharmacies' nationwide providing support to domestic violence victims

The Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU) marked the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women on November 25 with the [announcement](#) that there are now over 1000 pharmacies signed up to its “Safe Pharmacy” initiative. The program—which provides victims of domestic violence a safe place to access support—was launched in July as a partnership between IPU, the Health Service Executive, the charity Safe Ireland, and the country’s police force, An Garda Síochána. The participating pharmacies have specially trained staff who provide patients with access to a phone in a private consultation room and contact details for local support services, IPU said in a statement. “Knowing where to go for help can be a big challenge for people in abusive situations and through Safe Pharmacy, we have created over 1000 locations across the country where support is now available,” said Ruth Garahy, a pharmacist and member of the IPU’s Community Pharmacy Committee. “We want anyone to know that in Safe Pharmacies they will find compassion, respect and support.”

Switzerland: Swiss pharmacists association says country is experiencing medicine shortages

Switzerland is experiencing medicine shortages due to supply chain issues linked to COVID-19 lockdowns in China and war in Europe, according to the country’s pharmacists’ association, [Reuters reports](#). “We have the biggest problems with children’s medications, especially fever-reducing syrup,” Enea Martinelli from pharmaSuisse told Swiss broadcaster SRF. “There are also shortages of blood pressure medications, psychiatric medications and Parkinson’s medications,” he said. The situation has resulted in doctors sometimes being forced to procure medicine from abroad, the president of a Swiss doctors’ association told the broadcaster.

Australia: More than 10% now check with local pharmacist first on health issues

A decline in bulk billing, hikes in prices from general practitioners and health-care worker shortages have all had an effect in making pharmacists the first “go to” for more than 10% of Australians before they book a doctor’s appointment, the latest Australian Healthcare Index found. When asked whether increasing costs influenced respondents on going to the doctor, 11% of respondents said they “check with pharmacist first,” 53% said they visited their doctor less often, and 10% said they had changed their doctor as a result, [the Australian Journal of Pharmacy reports](#) (subscriber access only). The research, undertaken on behalf of the Australian Patients’ Association and HealthEngine, is based on responses of nearly 11 500 patients in September of this year. It found the top challenges for Australian health care include health-care worker shortages, emergency department waiting room times, increasing costs to see general practitioners, and prescription costs. Echoing cries from the Pharmacy Guild and others about the high costs of prescriptions, the research also revealed more than 1 in 5 (22%) patients have gone without necessary prescription medication because of the cost.

In Depth

RSV not just a kids problem, doctors warn, as infections surge in Canada

As rising cases of respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) among children fill pediatric hospitals across Canada, doctors say an increasing number of older adults are contracting the contagious respiratory virus as well and falling sick. While RSV is very contagious among kids under 5 years of age and can cause serious infection in babies, it’s not a disease that is exclusive to young children, [Global News explains](#).

Worth Repeating

“It’s within our knowledge and clinical expertise; this is just adding tools to that toolbox. It’s going to help us ensure patients have access to care outside of the typical 9 to 5 medical model.” —Dr. Nardine Nakhla, a Scarborough, ON, pharmacist and professor at the University of Waterloo School of Pharmacy, who was [one of the architects of new regulations](#) that will allow Ontario pharmacists to prescribe medications for 13 minor ailments including urinary

tract infections, tick bites, pink eye, cold sores and dermatitis, beginning January 1, 2023

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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