

Subject: The Weekly: CPhA’s Pharmacy News Update for August 31

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

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Canadian
Pharmacists
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Association des
pharmaciens
du Canada

The Weekly

Bringing the world of pharmacy together

August 31, 2022

CPhA

Enabling providers to manage drug shortages would alleviate strain on health care: CPhA

Pharmacists say enabling health-care providers to manage drug shortage situations would be a huge help in alleviating some of the strain on the health care system, [Global News reports](#). “Drug shortages are something that happens often behind the scenes,” said Dr. Danielle Paes, chief pharmacist officer at CPhA. “One in 4 Canadians has been impacted by or affected by a direct shortage, and pharmacists can spend up to 20% of their day, which for a typical shift is about 2 hours, managing drug shortages.” Paes said the shortage of any drugs could impact patients, regardless of how common or rare the disease is. “Not all pharmacists have the ability to make therapeutic substitutions or modify drug therapy and make adaptations in the moment,” said Paes. “Even though we have the information and the knowledge at the counter, in certain jurisdictions, pharmacists need to get approval from the prescriber.” She said this

“back and forth” could cause delays in therapy and ultimately impact the patient. “It would be really valuable to enable pharmacists to be able to make therapeutic substitutions and manage drug shortages,” Paes added.

International Overdose Awareness Day: Resources for pharmacy professionals

Today is International Overdose Awareness Day. Take a moment with us to remember and acknowledge the record numbers of lives lost to overdose throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Pharmacy professionals play a key role in reducing opioid-related harm and preventing overdose deaths across the country. To learn more about what you can do to address the overdose crisis in your community, check out our [Resource Round-up](#) for a range of practice tools, including an [infographic](#) and a [video tutorial](#) to help you teach patients how to respond to an overdose and administer naloxone nasal spray. The resource page also features links to the *Canadian Pharmacists Journal*'s 3-part [article series](#) addressing frequently asked questions about naloxone and an article on [guidelines for naloxone prescribing](#) by pharmacists.

Pharmacy Wellness Task Force convenes first meeting

CPhA's Pharmacy Wellness Task Force, established to incorporate a front-line pharmacy perspective within the overall [Pharmacy Workforce Wellness initiative](#), convened its first meeting this week. This task force, with members representing a variety of practice areas and across different career levels, will help inform and deliver on strategic activities related to professional well-being. The group will also work to identify, develop, and promote mental health resources and supports for the pharmacy workforce. “We want to safeguard and improve the mental health of our current and future generations of pharmacy professionals,” said Dr. Danielle Paes, chief pharmacist officer. “This task force will provide guidance and support to CPhA as we champion and advocate for positive change across the profession and health care system.”

Pharmacy on the frontlines

Easy access to naloxone key to giving those who overdose more time to seek care, says pharmacist

A Hamilton Health Sciences pharmacist hopes there will be a day when naloxone kits will be as common across Canada as first aid kits, fire extinguishers, and EpiPens. Harsit Patel said the medication is not just for those using illicit street drugs but also for people prescribed therapy who accidentally overdose. “About 96% of opioid overdoses are not intentional, they're accidental,” Patel [told Global News](#) ahead of International Overdose Awareness Day on August 31. “So, my role as a pharmacist

and hospital employee, when we get patients who overdose or just asking for a kit, is to educate them.” Naloxone is not a complete treatment for suspected overdoses but a tool that gives a patient more time to seek critical help from professionals and ultimately a “positive outcome,” according to the pharmacy specialist. Patel said those who may fear administering the treatment can take solace in the fact that there’s no evidence of any negative health effects when it’s given to someone not experiencing an opioid overdose. “But if you did give it when they are on opioids, you could potentially reverse their overdose and help them breathe again,” he said.

Provincial/Territorial

BC pharmacists want to take pressure off doctors with more power to prescribe drugs

Pharmacists in British Columbia are asking the provincial government to allow them to prescribe drugs in order to alleviate pressure on the health care system, [Global News reports](#). The BC Pharmacy Association (BCPhA) has suggested to government its pharmacists could take on prescribing authority for a range of self-diagnosable, limited conditions. Currently, pharmacists in British Columbia cannot prescribe medications but can do some renewals. If a prescription is more than a year old, it cannot be renewed and a doctor must review it. “We firmly believe there remains untapped potential for community pharmacists to respond to the needs that remain in finding more primary care for British Columbians,” BCPhA said in a submission to the province’s budget consultation. “What we propose is not new or revolutionary. Rather we are recommending BC move forward with an increased scope of practice for pharmacists.”

COVID-19 tests hard to find at NWT pharmacies

More than 2 years after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Yellowknifers are still hard-pressed to find rapid COVID-19 tests in local pharmacies, [according to NNSL Media](#). Of the 6 local pharmacies contacted, only 1, the Medicine Shoppe, said it carries rapid COVID-19 tests. The others—Sutherland’s Drugs, Shoppers Drug Mart, the Loblaw pharmacy, and the pharmacies at Walmart and the Co-op—all said they don’t carry the tests. A spokesperson for the Medicine Shoppe said the tests are provided completely independent from the government of the Northwest Territories (NWT), and that there had not been any discussion with the territorial government about providing tests through pharmacies. Other jurisdictions tell a different story. Since February, Ontario has been distributing rapid tests through pharmacies and grocery stores, although supplies are limited to 1 box of 5 tests per household. According to that province’s website, tests are available at nearly 3300 locations. At

least 3 other provinces—BC, Alberta and Manitoba—have also partnered with local pharmacies to distribute rapid COVID-19 tests free of charge.

Staff shortages in QC pharmacies result in closures and reduced hours

A Brunet pharmacy in Quebec will close its doors after more than a year of unsuccessfully trying to hire pharmacists, [according to *Le Soleil*](#) (original article in French). Across hospitals, long-term care centres and pharmacy settings, there is a shortage of nearly 700 pharmacists in Quebec, according to the Order of Pharmacists of Quebec (OPQ). And this shortage has only just begun, said Christian Blanchette, general manager of the Fleury Group and owner of Brunet. “The problem we have is that pharmacists are retiring earlier and earlier and there are not enough of them leaving [schools] to cover all departures,” Blanchette said. In addition to the upcoming closure of one of their Brunet outlets, the Fleury Group has also reduced the opening hours at 3 locations.

National

Funding strengthens access to sexual and reproductive health services for youth

Minister of Health Jean-Yves Duclos [announced](#) more than \$2.8 million in funding from the Sexual and Reproductive Health Fund for projects by the Centre for Sexuality, and the Sex Information and Education Council of Canada (SIECCAN). These projects will improve access to sexual and reproductive health services and resources for people in Canada who face the greatest barriers to access, which includes youth, persons with disabilities, and Indigenous peoples. “Everyone should have access to quality health services, where and when they need it,” Duclos said. “That’s why our government is committed to removing barriers and stigma that many across the country continue to face when accessing sexual and reproductive health services. Together, with organizations like the Centre for Sexuality and SIECCAN we are improving access to these essential services for youth, persons with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, and LGBTQ2 communities.”

Routine vaccination rates for children, teens in Canada dropped dramatically since start of COVID-19 pandemic

As students across the country embark on what many hope will be the most typical school year since the start of the pandemic, physicians and public health experts are increasingly concerned about a major increase in the number of young people unvaccinated against potentially serious infectious diseases, [the *Globe and Mail* reports](#). Pandemic-related disruptions, including school closings and reduced access to physicians’ offices, resulted in a substantial drop in vaccine uptake among children and

adolescents. That, combined with the widespread return to in-person learning, an increase in travel to areas where viruses like measles are still spreading, and the rise of misinformation, could set the stage for an increase in outbreaks in schools. While school closings and other pandemic disruptions are believed to be the driving factor in lower vaccination rates, there are concerns that misinformation and disinformation may also be playing a role. Dr. Vinita Dubey, associate medical officer of health with Toronto Public Health pointed to human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine misinformation, which was prevalent before the pandemic and contributing to a lower overall uptake. “The HPV vaccine is probably one of our most impactful vaccines,” she said. “Yet the rates for that vaccine are one of our lowest and a lot of that has been the role that misinformation has played when that vaccine rolled out.”

Implementing the CARD system to support vaccination in practice: Webinar for health-care providers

The CARD system (comfort, ask, relax, distract) is a vaccine delivery framework that improves the safety of vaccine delivery by reducing immunization stress-related responses, such as fear, pain, headache, dizziness, and fainting. In collaboration with the Canadian Vaccination Evidence Resource and Exchange Centre, the Public Health Agency of Canada has released a [webinar](#) for health-care professionals on strategies and approaches for introducing the CARD system in their practice based on practical examples of how CARD has been implemented by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

International

“Pharmacy united in action for a healthier world”: World Pharmacists Day 2022

This year's theme of World Pharmacists Day on September 25 aims to showcase pharmacy's positive impact on health around the world and further strengthen solidarity among the profession. The International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) invites colleagues from all sectors of the pharmacy profession to take part in the campaign and show the world how pharmacists are united for health, regardless of and overcoming conflict, different politics and cultures, and economic disparity. “The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal number 3 sets out a number of health targets including for non-communicable diseases (such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease and mental health) and communicable diseases (for example, HIV, tuberculosis and neglected tropical diseases). We have seen improvements in many of these areas and our profession should be proud of and make known its contributions. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has hindered progress and it is imperative that we rally to build back better,” said Dominique

Jordan, the president of FIP. [Check out](#) the campaign resources to help you celebrate.

Monkeypox cases drop 21% globally, reversing month-long increase: WHO

The number of monkeypox cases reported globally dropped by 21% last week, reversing a month-long trend of rising infections and a possible signal the outbreak in Europe may be starting to decline, according to a World Health Organization (WHO) report issued on August 25, [the Associated Press reports](#). The UN health agency reported 5907 new weekly cases and said 2 countries—Iran and Indonesia—reported their first cases. To date, more than 45 000 cases have been reported in 98 countries since late April. Cases in the Americas accounted for 60% of cases in the past month, WHO said, while cases in Europe comprised about 38%. The report said infections in the Americas showed “a continuing steep rise.” Canadian Chief Public Health Officer Dr. Theresa Tam said during a news conference on August 12 that Canada has so far deployed 99 000 vaccines to provinces and territories. She said it is “too soon to tell” if cases are slowing in Canada, but there may be “some early signs” that they aren’t increasing at the same rate as during the beginning of the outbreak.

US: Moderna says it’s suing Pfizer, BioNTech over COVID-19 shots

Moderna is suing Pfizer and BioNTech, claiming the technology in their COVID-19 vaccine infringes on its patents—a move that sets the stage for a massive legal clash between the vaccine titans, [according to Bloomberg](#). Moderna accused Pfizer and BioNTech of violating intellectual property rights on key elements of its messenger RNA technology in developing the Comirnaty vaccine. Moderna said it had patents from 2010 to 2016 on the mRNA technology that made its Spikevax shot possible but that the other 2 companies copied the technology without permission. Pfizer and BioNTech “took 4 different candidates into clinical testing, including options that would have steered clear of Moderna’s innovative path by using unmodified mRNA,” according to a lawsuit filed on August 26 in the US District Court in Massachusetts. “Ultimately, however, Pfizer and BioNTech discarded those alternatives and copied Moderna’s patented technology.”

US: Adderall supply squeeze is growing

An Adderall shortage that kicked off with Teva Pharmaceuticals in early August has extended to 3 other generics giants as demand for the prescription attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) drug spikes, [Fierce Pharma reports](#). Alongside Teva, Amneal Pharmaceuticals, Purdue subsidiary Rhodes Pharmaceuticals and Novartis’ soon-to-be-spun-off generics unit Sandoz have generic extended-release Adderall on back order, according to a [recent supply update](#) from the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists, which tracks current drug shortages. Together, the quartet of drugmakers provide just over half of all generic extended-release Adderall in the US,

[Bloomberg News notes](#), citing data from Symphony Health that shows prescriptions dispensed at pharmacies in recent months. The supply disruption intersects with an unprecedented spike in Adderall prescriptions this year, which has been attributed to a combination of increased ADHD diagnoses and greater availability of the medicine through online startups. Those startup companies, such as Cerebral and Done, have also taken flak for their prescribing practices because stimulant-based Adderall can be prone to abuse.

Australia: Growth in pharmacy workforce urgently needed to better serve health system

The President of the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA), Dr. Fei Sim, has called for the Australian federal government to urgently invest into growing workforce capacity in pharmacy, ahead of this week's Jobs and Skills Summit, [Mirage News reports](#). Despite being the only body representing all pharmacists in Australia, PSA has not been invited to attend the Jobs and Skills Summit, which comes after the entire pharmacy sector was also snubbed from the Health Minister's recent Health Workforce Summit. "Growth in pharmacy workforce capacity is urgently needed to meet the demands of our patients, communities and health system. Just like other industries, labour shortages are affecting pharmacies and putting further strain on already exhausted pharmacists," Sim said. "We have been on the frontlines for 2 and a half years, keeping our heads above water and dealing with workforce shortages to keep our communities safe. Now is the time for serious action to boost the pharmacist workforce."

In Depth

Two kinds of 'bivalent' COVID-19 vaccines are coming. Which cocktail should you count on?

As wealthy countries begin to jockey anew for orders, is it better to have an updated vaccine now, or hold out for one that might be even better? The *Toronto Star* [looks at](#) the pros and cons.

Worth Repeating

"It's putting strain on an already challenging situation and so there's an opportunity for Canadians to help support the way that we're managing this by buying what they need and leaving some behind for the next individual." —Dr. Danielle Paes, CPhA's chief pharmacist officer, on the [current children's cold and flu medication supply interruptions](#)

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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