



Canadian  
Pharmacists  
Association

Association des  
pharmaciens  
du Canada

# The Weekly

Bringing the world of pharmacy together

**April 5, 2023**

**CPhA**

## ***CPhA responds to government's plan to strengthen regulation on natural health products***

The federal government is hoping to strengthen its regulatory power over natural health products, such as vitamins and homeopathic medicines, according to a measure in the 2023 budget. The budget proposes amending the *Food and Drugs Act* to extend powers by the *Protecting Canadians from Unsafe Drugs Act* (also known as Vanessa's Law) to natural health products. Vanessa's Law is a piece of 2014 legislation that requires the reporting of serious adverse effects for medications used within the Canadian health-care system, Barry Power, CPhA's editor-in-chief, [told Global News](#). The law applies to an array of products including prescription and over-the-counter drugs, vaccines, gene therapies, tissues and organs, and medical devices. It does not cover natural health products. "With natural health products, there is no requirement for health-care professionals or consumers to report side effects that come with it," Power said. Not only are side effects not well documented for natural health products, he added, but another danger is for people taking it in combination with other medications. If Vanessa's Law makes natural health product manufacturers report serious adverse effects, it will "help to build a

database that will better inform health-care professionals and consumers about some of the potential downsides of using the medications,” Power explained.

***Reminder: Applications open for the IPPC Indigenous Pharmacy Scholarship!***

The [Indigenous Pharmacy Professionals of Canada](#) (IPPC) and CPhA are thrilled to announce the launch of the new IPPC Indigenous Pharmacy Scholarship. With both PharmD and technician scholarships available for the 2023/2024 academic year, this funding will help reduce financial barriers for Indigenous students interested in pursuing a career in pharmacy. Applications are now being accepted and the deadline to apply is April 30. Thank you to our founding sponsors, Johnson & Johnson, Shoppers Drug Mart, Green Shield Canada and Sobeys National Pharmacy Group, for their generous support of the IPPC Indigenous Pharmacy Scholarship. [Apply now](#).

---

## Pharmacy on the front lines

***NL pharmacist commends government’s decision to switch costly biologic medications to generic***

A Bell Island pharmacist is commending Newfoundland and Labrador’s decision to switch some biologic medications to generic options in the province’s prescription drug program as a good move that should have little impact on patients. Dr. Kara O’Keefe [told VOXM](#) that most of the injectable drugs included in the switch are insulins used to treat diabetes, with the exception of a few medications used to treat things such as arthritis and psoriasis. She said there are some small differences when comparing brand name drugs to generic under a microscope, but the medications are unlikely to be less effective. O’Keefe explained that generic drugs are considered biosimilar medications, meaning that the large molecules in the medications are very similar and are proven to continue to work well for many patients. By switching to generic drugs, O’Keefe said the government will save an average of \$20 on each prescription—something that sounds small but can result in big savings. She said there are patients who require up to 10 boxes of insulin every 3 months—that’s \$200 in savings from a single person. With those savings, O’Keefe noted the provincial drug program is able to expand

coverage for other costly drugs, such as oral blood thinner medications, which used to have no coverage due to cost.

---

## Provincial/Territorial

### ***NL expands list of health problems that pharmacists can treat***

One day after the Newfoundland and Labrador government announced new prescribing powers for registered nurses, the province's pharmacists learned their ability to assess ailments and issue prescriptions will also expand, [CBC reports](#). At a news conference on April 4 announcing the changes, Premier Andrew Furey said allowing pharmacists to assess and prescribe medication for 4 new ailments and conditions will let people get help faster, ease the strain on the province's doctors and emergency rooms, and save the province money in the long run. The 4 conditions that will now be covered by pharmacists for anyone with a valid medical care plan card by pharmacists are conjunctivitis, fungal nail infections, shingles and uncomplicated urinary tract infections. The government also announced pharmacists will be able to extend prescriptions up to 1 year, rather than the previous maximum of 90 days. Dr. Janice Audeau, a Corner Brook pharmacist and president of the Pharmacists' Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, said the initiative is a "tremendous step forward," especially the expansion of universal coverage by pharmacists to also include treatment for gastroesophageal reflux disease, nicotine dependence, cold sores, fungal skin infections and hemorrhoids. Patients previously had to pay out of pocket at a pharmacy unless covered by the provincial prescription drug program. She said patients, given a choice, often opt for an option that doesn't require an out-of-pocket payment rather than one with an associated cost.

### ***Yukon pharmacists now able to prescribe and administer vaccines***

Pharmacists in the Yukon are now authorized to prescribe and administer travel and publicly funded vaccines for Yukoners aged 5 and older, the government [announced](#) on April 3. Yukon temporarily expanded pharmacists' scope of practice in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, first in May 2020 and then again in February 2022. These measures are now permanent. Participating pharmacists must complete mandatory training provided by the Yukon Immunization Program before ordering or administering publicly funded

vaccines to ensure pharmacists have the knowledge to provide safe and effective vaccination services. “As we work towards a more holistic, collaborative and preventive health care system, we value the contributions of pharmacists in promoting the health and wellbeing of all Yukoners. The expansion of the scope of practice for pharmacists is a vital aspect of our government’s work to continue to transform our health care system into a national leader,” Minister of Health and Social Services Tracy-Anne McPhee said in a news release. “This service improves convenience for Yukoners, increases access to health care and alleviates pressures on emergency rooms and doctors offices.”

### ***BC moves closer to allowing pharmacists to prescribe for minor ailments***

British Columbia has taken the first steps to allow pharmacists to prescribe for minor ailments and contraception with 2 proposed amendments, [Canadian Healthcare Network reports](#) (subscriber access only). If moved through, pharmacists would be able to prescribe for minor ailments and contraception starting June 1, 2023. The expansion, announced in September, would bring BC’s pharmacists in line with the 9 other provinces where pharmacists already prescribe for minor ailments—and the 4 that already allow pharmacists to prescribe for contraception. The College of Pharmacists of BC and the Ministry of Health have been working together to create the framework for amending the *Health Professions Act*. One proposed amendment lists the minor ailments pharmacists could treat, including acne, allergic rhinitis, dermatitis, fungal infections, gastroesophageal reflux disease, and uncomplicated urinary tract infections. It also covers how pharmacists will be able to prescribe Schedule 1 drugs after making a diagnosis. The other proposed amendment is around creating a committee to develop, review and recommend standards, limits and conditions for minor ailments and contraceptive prescribing.

---

## **National**

### ***Canada first country to release national guidelines on managing kids’ pain***

The Health Standards Organization has released a new set of guidelines to help hospital workers manage children’s pain—particularly for those who can’t communicate when they’re hurt. It’s the first national standard in the world

focused on pediatric pain, [the Canadian Press reports](#). Emergency physician and pediatric pain researcher Dr. Samina Ali explained that for a long time, doctors believed young children's nervous systems were so underdeveloped they couldn't feel or remember pain. Now it's clear their bodies not only remember the trauma, but also that pain can severely impact their development in the long term. The new standards lay out how to stay on top of pain management for young patients, including mandating incident reports when a patient experiences preventable, untreated and unmanaged pain. Accreditation Canada and the Health Standards Organization will make the guidelines available to hospitals and health workers for free, but hope they could one day form the basis of policy and training for health-care professionals.

***Most medical cannabis users aren't going the prescription route, raising safety concerns: Manitoba-led study***

A new report led by the University of Manitoba suggests the majority of Canadians who consume medical cannabis aren't being prescribed the drug, but rather are getting it through the recreational market, raising some health and safety concerns, [CBC reports](#). In Canada, cannabis can be legally accessed recreationally or through a medical cannabis licensed seller with a medical authorization, similar to a prescription. Among people who use cannabis for medical needs, rather than for recreational purposes, two-thirds of people use it for chronic pain, mental health or sleep issues, the report said. Over half of the 5744 Canadians surveyed for the study published on April 4 obtained their cannabis without medical authorization. "This raises real concerns around safety," said principal investigator Lynda Balneaves, a professor in the College of Nursing at the University of Manitoba. The people who consumed cannabis without a medical authorization were 20% less likely to speak to or seek information from a health-care professional and 16% more likely to rely on unqualified sources of information, including social media and staff at the recreational cannabis store, the study found. These people without a prescription were also 14% more likely to report not knowing how much cannabis they were taking and 7% more likely to experience side effects.

---

## International

### ***US: Pharmacists are burning out and patients are feeling the effects***

Growing workloads and resulting stresses on pharmacists have led to well-documented burnout and subsequent staffing shortages in the pharmacy profession, [the Washington Post reports](#) (subscriber access only). Reflecting new demands on pharmacies, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports, for instance, that 301 million COVID-19 vaccinations were administered in pharmacies as of March 9—roughly half of all such shots given nationally. So, while the pandemic slammed pharmacists, as it did many other health-care workers, pharmacy groups say working conditions are generally more stressful and demanding now than they were before the pandemic. Ilisa Bernstein, the interim chief executive of the American Pharmacists Association, said in late February that little has improved since the 2021 National State-Based Pharmacy Workplace Study revealed a majority of pharmacists face insufficient time and staff shortages. While some pharmacies have made changes, such as closing for a 30-minute staff lunch and instituting signing bonuses, when it comes to pharmacist burnout, “we’re not seeing much improvement at all,” she said. Excerpts from an upcoming National Pharmacist Workforce Study were presented at the APhA annual meeting in Phoenix at the end of March. The new findings, which will be released in May, support Bernstein’s conclusion that little has changed since 2021, documenting that self-reported workplace conditions have broadly worsened since 2019 for many pharmacists.

### ***UK: NHS policy team designing menopause referral service for community pharmacy***

Community pharmacists could refer patients with menopausal symptoms to another health-care professional for diagnosis, under a new pharmacy service being developed by the National Health Service (NHS), [the Pharmaceutical Journal reports](#) (subscriber access only). The service is under consideration for inclusion in updated data standards drawn up by the Professional Record Standards Body (PRSB), which develops standards for patient records, with slides published on the PRSB website stating that an NHS policy team is designing the service. When implemented by information technology system suppliers, the standards mean pharmacy staff can digitally update general practitioner records with patient details, advice given and medicine supplied. Speaking at the Westminster Health Forum on March 28, Stephen Goundrey-Smith, clinical advisor to the PRSB, said the PRSB is in the process of “updating the community pharmacy standard” to include additional “proposed

pharmacy services,” such as services relating to menopause, cancer referrals and weight management. The standard was previously updated in 2021 to include additional pharmacy services that were under consideration at the time, including a contraception monitoring service, which was later piloted in community pharmacies across England and commissioned as an advanced service.

---

## In Depth

### ***The latest on Canada’s baby formula shortage—and how experts say parents should respond***

Canada’s baby formula shortage has stabilized and the situation is improving, according to officials, including Health Canada, pediatricians and industry representatives. But supply problems continue, leaving many parents and caregivers with questions—including what they should do. It’s been more than a year since a product recall forced formula manufacturing giant Abbott Nutrition to close its Michigan factory in February 2022. [CBC gives an update](#) on the situation.

---

## Worth Repeating

“Andreas [Pohle] is always polite, professional and is extremely knowledgeable. He has helped my husband and I with our medications. Being new to New Brunswick, and not having a family doctor yet, Andreas has been able to refill certain medications . . . Andreas was also able to advise me with the purchase of a new blood pressure machine and other medical devices. Andreas always greets customers by name, even after only one visit. The atmosphere of this store is always welcoming and customers are never rushed, no matter how busy they are.” —Beth Singer, a patient from Bathurst, New Brunswick, and [the winner of CPhA’s 2023 #MyFavePharm contest](#), on why she nominated her pharmacist Andreas Pohle

---

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.

Canadian Pharmacists Association  
851 Industrial Avenue, Mailbox M035  
Ottawa, ON K1G 4L3  
[Contact Us](#)