



The Weekly

Bringing the world of pharmacy together

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CPhA

CPhA presents before Standing Committee on Health on workforce crisis

CPhA's Chief Pharmacist Officer, Dr. Danielle Paes, [appeared](#) before the Standing Committee on Health on April 4 to speak about Canada's health workforce, highlighting pharmacy professionals' contributions throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact it's had on pharmacists. In her remarks, Paes said the pandemic has had a major impact on the supply of pharmacists and their support staff and that an alarming number of pharmacists are contemplating leaving the profession. "It has been heart-breaking to listen to the stories of my front-line colleagues who are exhausted. For most, the stress and pressures they are under at work coupled with the challenges they face personally are at a breaking point," she said. CPhA believes urgent action is needed to address this impending catastrophe and that the federal government can play an important role in helping provide supports like targeted mental health resources to help pharmacy teams cope with the struggles they've faced over the past 2 years, and strategies and funding to ensure that there is an appropriate supply of pharmacy professionals, particularly in rural and remote areas. Paes added that financial incentives, loan forgiveness for health-care workers, and subsidies for employers providing practical experience to students and internationally trained health-care workers are just a few of the recommendations that could help avert a future health-care workforce shortage and emergency.

Pharmacies have big role to play in making Paxlovid more accessible

Conversations are happening with provincial governments to try to make antiviral drug Paxlovid more accessible through community pharmacies, said Danielle Paes, CPO at CPhA. “We know that pharmacies are in every jurisdiction,” Paes said [in an interview with CBC](#). “We’re able to get it into the communities that need it.” Quebec is the only jurisdiction in Canada so far that has given pharmacists the authority to prescribe Paxlovid. In most other provinces, once you get a prescription for Paxlovid, you can only get it filled at designated community pharmacies. Following Quebec’s lead and giving pharmacists prescribing authority for Paxlovid in other provinces would also help streamline the process of getting COVID-19 treatment, Paes said. Pharmacists already administer COVID-19 tests, she said, so a patient could get their test, prescription and medication all in one place. Precautions need to be taken to reduce the risk of symptomatic patients infecting other people, Paes stressed, noting that Quebec pharmacies are offering delivery of rapid COVID-19 tests to symptomatic patients and doing consultations over the phone.

CPhA Chair Christina Tulk first MUN School of Pharmacy graduate to be named honorary white coat recipient

When Christina Tulk was notified she’d been named the honorary white coat recipient for 2022 by the Memorial University (MUN) School of Pharmacy, she said her reaction “was one of disbelief . . . There are so many deserving pharmacists out there, and I am so proud to be recognized for my contributions to our school and our profession thus far. It’s truly an honour,” she [told the Gazette](#). What’s especially satisfying to Tulk is that she is the first School of Pharmacy graduate to be named an honorary white coat recipient. “That in itself is humbling. It gives me a huge sense of pride and career satisfaction to be recognized like this,” she said. Tulk wears a lot of hats, or, more accurately, a lot of white coats. She is also chair of CPhA and the owner of the Shoppers Drug Mart at Millbrook Mall in Corner Brook, Newfoundland and Labrador. She counts taking on the CPhA chair role in a tumultuous 2020 as a career highlight. “The pandemic has fundamentally changed how we go about our day and routines,” she said. “There’s certainly more recognition of how we serve health care and serve patients and there is a renewed focus on a common scope of practice for all pharmacists in Canada. There is one scope and we all need to practice that scope.”

CPhA CPO to be featured in podcast on the future of health care

In partnership with the People Before Patients health-care reform movement, Teva Canada is launching [a series of 5 podcasts](#) featuring health-care thought leaders who will share their vision of a future health-care system that supports patients and caregivers in all stages of life. Dr. Danielle Paes, CPO at CPhA, will be featured in an episode airing on April 12. “I am so excited to be part of this important conversation about what the future of Canada’s health care should look like from all perspectives,” Paes said. “It’s about leading change with an understanding of our common humanity and a desire to collaborate on our health journey.”

Provincial

Manitoba launches program to help people quit smoking

The Manitoba government has launched its first health-related social impact bond, Quit Smoking with Your Manitoba Pharmacist, to support thousands of people in becoming non-smokers, [according to the Winnipeg Sun](#). The social impact bond, which also can be known as a “pay-for-success” bond, will see Shoppers Drug Mart front \$2 million for the program and get \$2.12 million from the government if targets are met. Manitobans aged 18 and over are eligible for assistance and can approach participating pharmacies for an assessment. The program will see 500 pharmacists available to help people quit smoking. Counselling sessions and up to \$100 worth of prescribed medications and nicotine replacement therapies will be offered over 1 year. “Evidence shows that individuals attempting to quit tobacco products have the best chance of success when counselling from a health-care professional is combined with effective medication treatment to manage cravings and withdrawal symptoms,” said Darren Murphy, the president of Pharmacists Manitoba.

Ontario pharmacists may be weeks away from minor ailment prescribing becoming a reality

Ontario pharmacists might not have to wait much longer to be able to assess and prescribe for minor ailments, [according to Canadian Healthcare Network \(subscriber access\)](#). Justin Bates, CEO of the Ontario Pharmacists Association (OPA), said OPA is actively discussing these changes with the government and is hopeful they will “have good news to share in the coming weeks.” It was hoped that pharmacists in Ontario would be able to assess common ailments by the end of 2021. But that didn’t happen, delayed partly by the government focusing on pandemic-related changes, Bates said. Pharmacists in 8 provinces across the country can already prescribe medications for minor ailments, and the number of ailments that they can prescribe have been growing. In addition, all Faculty of Pharmacy programs now also include minor ailment prescribing and assessment. It’s a shift the public wants, Bates says, and it makes sense within the health-care system. “[Minor ailment work] aligns very well with what pharmacists are trained and educated for, and it alleviates pressures on other parts of the systems . . . it adds overall system capacity,” he said.

Quebec pharmacists can now prescribe Paxlovid

Pharmacists in Quebec are now authorized to prescribe the antiviral drug Paxlovid to symptomatic patients with COVID-19 who are at risk of developing complications and who test positive for the virus, [CTV reports](#). Quebec Health Minister Christian Dubé and the minister responsible for professional law enforcement, Danielle McCann, believe that access to a pharmacist’s prescription from one of Quebec’s 1900 community pharmacies will provide proximity to care and encourage faster treatment initiation. The authorities specified that a pharmacist could prescribe the medication, but if the patient’s condition deteriorates 2 days after the start of the treatment, the pharmacist will have to refer the patient to a physician or a nurse practitioner.

Pharmacists take over COVID-19 shots as province shuts down vaccine clinics

New Brunswick pharmacists will be administering nearly all COVID-19 shots after mass

vaccination clinics conducted by the regional health authorities were shut down on March 31, [according to CBC](#). Jake Reid, the executive director of the New Brunswick Pharmacists' Association (NBPhA), said pharmacists are ready. Reid said NBPhA was notified weeks ago about the plan. With the demand for vaccinations waning, he said there is no longer a need for the mass clinics. "And we need those regional health authority staff to return to their regular jobs," Reid said. Roughly 190 of the province's 233 pharmacies will continue to deliver vaccinations. At the peak of delivery, 208 participated. Based on current demand, Reid said pharmacies are equipped to deal with the workload. Last week, for example, about 2000 people got vaccinated in the province, which works out to about 300 per day.

Pharmacists hope tick assessments can help with rising cases of Lyme disease

The Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia (PANS) remains concerned about rising cases of Lyme disease, [CityNews reports](#). Last fall, the provincial government [announced](#) that Nova Scotians can now head to their local pharmacy if they've been bitten by a tick. "What pharmacists can do is provide a free service to assess and prevent Lyme disease," said Diane Harpell, the chair of PANS. Previously, Nova Scotians had to see a physician or nurse practitioner in order for the assessment to be covered by the province. Although the patient will still have to pay for the treatment, Harpell hopes the free diagnosis will help with the worrying rise of Lyme disease in the province.

National

Canada's vaccine advisory body recommends 'rapid deployment' of second booster shot for 80+

Canada's National Advisory Committee on Immunization is now strongly recommending the "rapid deployment" of second COVID-19 booster shots for seniors aged 80 and up in the community and those living in long-term care and other congregate settings, [according to CBC](#). In NACI's latest [statement](#) from April 5, it stressed the need to ward off "protection against severe disease potentially decreasing over time following the first booster dose" and mitigate the risk of highly transmissible variants that can evade immunity. The updated guidance follows US federal regulators recently [authorizing](#) a fourth dose of Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine for Americans 50 and older, and for anyone aged 12 and up with compromised immune systems.

Rexall's Bubble Campaign supports caregiver initiatives

Rexall Care Network, a non-profit organization that is part of the Rexall Pharmacy Group, has launched a campaign to bolster the MS Society of Canada's initiatives to support caregivers of people living with MS, [according to Multiple Sclerosis News Today](#). The Bubble Campaign, which began March 27 and runs through April 30, seeks to raise \$120,000. During checkout at any of the 390 participating Rexall pharmacies across Canada, customers will have the opportunity to purchase a "bubble" or to round their purchase to the nearest dollar. Proceeds will allow the MS Society to expand its caregiver-support initiatives. According to the MS Society of Canada, nearly half of Canadians 15 and over have provided care to a family member or friend

living with a disability. Those caregivers have responsibilities that include transportation, housework chores, and keeping tabs on finances and medical appointments, and many of them also work a paid job and care for children. Notably, Canada has one of the highest rates of MS in the world, meaning that many Canadians are supporting the health and wellness of a loved one with MS.

Diabetes Canada and Walmart Canada partner to drive diabetes awareness and education to help Canadians live better

Diabetes Canada and Walmart Canada are partnering to build diabetes awareness while providing educational opportunities and access to screening for Canadians across the country. According to [a news release](#), the partnership will provide Canadians with education about diabetes and associated health risks through several digital initiatives, in-store support tools and resources through Walmart's network of pharmacists and opticians, and educational events, such as Walmart Wellness Days, which provide Canadians with access to screening for type 2 diabetes. Today, 11.7 million Canadians living with diabetes or prediabetes—a condition that, if left unmanaged, can develop into type 2 diabetes. Diabetes is known to reduce lifespan, and people with the disease are more likely to be hospitalized for amputations, kidney failure, heart attacks, strokes and heart failure, and to experience vision loss.

Federal government launching new COVID-19 health impact survey

The government of Canada [announced](#) April 4 that it has launched a second cycle of a national survey to assess the health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Following up on an initial round carried out in late 2020 and early 2021, Statistics Canada will send invitations to participate to 100 000 randomly selected Canadians aged 18 years and older across all 10 provinces. The development of this survey will estimate the prevalence of post COVID-19 condition (commonly known as long COVID) in Canada, and will provide information on the risk factors, symptoms and impacts of this condition on daily functioning. Over the course of the first week of April, the first 33 000 selected Canadians will receive in the mail a link to the online survey with questions related to their general health, any chronic symptoms and conditions, their COVID-19 history and related symptoms, vaccination status, interactions with the health-care system, and medication use.

International

Scotland: Health-care professions join forces on sustainability

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society Scotland and the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and Faculties in Scotland brought together health-care leaders [to discuss](#) how they can work together to make prescribing more environmentally sustainable. A representative from every health-care profession that prescribes medicines was invited to the meeting, including general practitioners, hospital doctors, pharmacists, nurses and allied health professionals. At the meeting, key strategies to work in a more sustainable way were discussed, including how to prescribe more sustainably, reduce medication waste through regular medication reviews,

improve repeat prescription ordering systems, and reduce reliance on prescribing by involving patients in decisions about whether to take a medicine or consider a clinically suitable alternative such as exercise or activity programs.

England: Pharmacy teams prevented more than 3500 hospital readmissions in under 1 year

Community pharmacy teams helped to prevent more than 3500 30-day readmissions to hospital between February and December last year, as part of the Discharge Medicines Service (DMS), [Chemist+Druggist reports](#). Under the service, hospitals can digitally refer patients to community pharmacies for advice on newly prescribed medicines or changed prescriptions. According to an April 1 [tweet from the “We are Primary Care” National Health Service \(NHS\) England and NHS Improvement account](#), community pharmacy teams reviewed more than 80 000 patient referrals sent from NHS trusts between February and December 2021, which prevented more than 3500 patients being readmitted to hospital within 30 days of discharge. Pharmacy owners [told Chemist+Druggist in February](#) that they had had mixed levels of success with the DMS in the past year since its launch, with some praising the “prompt” and “thorough information” now coming from hospitals via the service, and others saying they were keen to offer the service but had not yet had any patient referrals.

Spain: Farma13 joining together thousands of pharmacies to send medications to Ukraine

Farma13, a Spanish pharmacy, is uniting a network of solidarity pharmacies to send medicine and medical supplies to non-governmental organizations that distribute medical supplies to hospitals, clinics and people in conflict zones. According to [a news release](#), the online pharmacy has created a page where pharmacies can register and receive instructions on how they can collaborate and help Ukraine at this time. In collaboration with the Nadiya Organization, Farma13 has already sent treatment material to Poland as well as children’s hygiene products for all children who have had to seek refuge in the country.

In Depth

Study examines work of Nova Scotia pharmacists, the pandemic’s ‘unsung heroes’

If not for community pharmacists, many Nova Scotians would have had nowhere to turn for their primary health-care needs during the pandemic. That’s one of the takeaways from [a new research paper](#) in the *International Journal of Clinical Pharmacy*, “Community Pharmacists’ Expanding Role in Supporting Patients Before and During COVID-19: An Exploratory Qualitative Study.” The authors found the role played by Nova Scotia pharmacists in delivering primary care during the pandemic has highlighted an “urgent need” for funding and legislative and structural changes that could help pharmacists better fill health-care gaps. This is especially true in rural areas where pre-existing challenges were exacerbated as a result of COVID-19.

Why is WHO pushing back on a Health Canada–approved Medicago COVID-19 vaccine?

In February, Health Canada approved Covifenz, the first Canadian-made COVID-19 vaccine, but

a World Health Organization official said it's unlikely the vaccine will be approved for emergency use internationally because of the company's links to the tobacco industry, [according to the Canadian Medical Association Journal](#). Tobacco giant Philip Morris International owns a one-third equity stake in Medicago, the Quebec-based company that developed Covifenz with help from the federal government. The deal also raised eyebrows among public health advocates, some of whom argue the government's partnership with Medicago conflicts with Canada's international commitments on tobacco control.

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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