



Canadian
Pharmacists
Association

Association des
pharmaciens
du Canada

The Weekly

Bringing the world of pharmacy together

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CPhA

Live Q&A for parents on flu and virus season featuring CPhA's CPO

In collaboration with Solutions for Kids in Pain and Children's Healthcare Canada, parenting website YMC is hosting a [live Q&A session on its Facebook page](#) today at 8:00 pm ET. CPhA's Chief Pharmacist Officer, Dr. Danielle Paes, family doctor Dr. Javed Alloo and psychologist Dr. Katie Birnie will be answering questions from parents about surviving flu and virus season while hospitals are in crisis. They will also provide tools and strategies to keep kids safe and healthy this winter.

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).”

Pharmacy on the front lines

Alberta pharmacist stresses importance of flu shot ahead of the holidays

An Edmonton pharmacist [told Global News](#) he is seeing fewer people coming through the doors for their flu shots this year compared to previous years, and he hopes to see that change. New numbers released December 1 show just over 1 million Albertans—22.5% of the population—have received an influenza vaccine this season. VIDA Pharmacy manager Vishav Singh said he believes vaccine fatigue may be playing a role in the flu shot uptake, after a couple of years of COVID-19 vaccine rollouts. “The percentage of people getting flu shot this year, or last couple of years, is way down as compared to the pre-COVID era,” he said. Singh added that he thinks some people may have already gotten the flu this year and don’t think they need a flu vaccine. “If you’re feeling better now after your flu or you haven’t got the flu and no flu shot yet, please come to down to pharmacy, get your flu shot,” Singh said, stressing the importance of protecting yourself and those around you heading into the holiday season.

Provincial

Alberta announces plans to import 5 million bottles of children’s medication

Alberta Premier Danielle Smith and Health Minister Jason Copping announced December 6 during a press conference that the province is planning to import 5 million bottles of children’s pain and fever medications. The procurement initiative was led by Alberta Health Services with supply to come from Turkey-based Atabay Pharmaceuticals and Fine Chemicals, [the Edmonton Journal reports](#). Smith said they’re hoping to fast-track Health Canada approvals and get more acetaminophen and ibuprofen on pharmacy shelves within a few weeks. According to a [statement](#) from Health Canada, they met with provincial officials to provide information on the steps required for exceptional importation

of foreign product, but have yet to formally engage in the federal approval process for importation. The Alberta Pharmacists Association issued a [news release](#) the same day to welcome the news and acknowledge the work of Alberta's pharmacists throughout the shortage.

Doctors paid 5 times more than nurses and pharmacists to administer COVID-19 vaccines in ON: report

Doctors were paid significantly higher rates than nurses and pharmacists for administering COVID-19 vaccines, Ontario's auditor general has found. "The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of the Solicitor General did not oversee equitable and reasonable payment processes for vaccinators," the report, which was released November 30, said. According to the auditor general, doctors received about \$170 an hour to work in a mass vaccination or mobile pop-up clinic operated by a public health unit or hospital, while nurses received between \$32 and \$49 an hour, [CP24 reports](#). Registered practical nurses were paid even less. Pharmacists were paid about \$30 an hour to work in a public health mass vaccination or mobile clinic and between \$43 and \$57 an hour at a hospital. "While the Ministry of Health informed us that it paid physicians more than nurses because doctors generally are paid more, it did not have an analysis to show this was fair given that health-care professionals all performed this task at vaccination sites," the report said.

Some NS, NL pharmacies offering HIV, hepatitis C and syphilis testing

Nova Scotians and Newfoundlanders and Labradorians can now get tested for HIV, hepatitis C and syphilis at some pharmacies, as part of a year-long research project that aims to increase pharmacy point-of-care testing for sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections, according to reports from [CityNews](#) and [CBC](#). The program, which launched December 1 on World AIDS Day, will be seen in certain provinces across Canada, including Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador. "Many Nova Scotians lack access to testing if they do not have a primary care provider or local sexual health center," said Dr. Tasha Ramsey, the study's provincial lead for Nova Scotia. "[The study] will explore community pharmacies as a new HIV, hepatitis C, and syphilis testing setting that may help to fill this gap and link people with care." Early last month, public health officials reported an increase in Nova Scotians who have been newly diagnosed with HIV; however, Nova Scotia Health estimates 14% of those with HIV and 40% of those with hepatitis C don't know their status.

“People don’t even know they have this, which allows the spreading to happen even further. By giving people a place to come and be tested in a way that’s comfortable for them, we’re hoping that will contribute to better health,” Allison Bodnar, CEO of the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia, [told CTV News](#). So far, 10 pharmacies in Nova Scotia and 11 in Newfoundland and Labrador have signed up to offer the testing.

National

Influenza cases rising ‘steeply’ amid flu epidemic

Canada continues to be in the thick of the flu epidemic, according to the [latest national FluWatch](#), which reports a steady incline of influenza activity—particularly affecting young children and older adults, [CTV reports](#). “At the national level, influenza activity has continued to increase steeply as we enter the fifth week of the national influenza epidemic. All surveillance indicators are increasing and all are above expected levels typical of this time of year,” the report released on December 2 said. Between November 20 and November 26, 8226 laboratory detections were reported, compared to the 5891 reported in the previous week—an increase of about 14.8%. PEI, Alberta and British Columbia are the hardest-hit provinces. Many of the cases—roughly 46%—were reported in Canadians aged 0–19 years old, but the groups experiencing more serious outcomes from influenza were children under the age of 4 and adults over the age of 45.

Canadian Paediatric Society webinar: Managing critical drug shortages in clinical practice

The Canadian Paediatric Society (CPS) is inviting pharmacists and other health-care providers to join its [December 8 webinar](#) on clinical practice in the current state of pediatric drug shortages. The session will focus on child-friendly liquid formulations of commonly prescribed antibiotics, outline resource-sensitive guidelines for antibiotic prescribing for common pediatric infections, and describe new and effective prescribing strategies to enable safe and effective resource-sensitive antibiotic dispensing. CPS has also published clinical practice guidelines for managing critical drug shortages in [English](#) and [French](#).

International

US: CVS tries out remote system to help fill prescriptions

CVS Health Corp. is testing a system that allows pharmacists to process prescriptions in part remotely—a move the company said could improve store working conditions and customer experience as the company grapples with a shortage of pharmacists, [the Wall Street Journal reports](#) (subscriber access only). CVS has equipped roughly 8000 of its more than 9000 US pharmacies with technology that allows pharmacists to review and enter prescription information remotely while still meeting patient-privacy requirements. About 400 of CVS's 30 000 pharmacists are currently helping prepare prescriptions either at central locations, from their homes or in stores other than where medications will be dispensed, the company said.

US: Walmart broadens commitment to accelerate end of AIDS

To mark World AIDS Day on December 1, Walmart launched 4 new HIV-focused specialty community pharmacies and a nationwide HIV prevention and treatment continuing education program for pharmacists, [Drug Store News reports](#). These broadened commitments aim to increase access to affordable testing, treatment and HIV research initiatives. Over the past 4 decades since the HIV epidemic began, Walmart says it's seen incredible progress in HIV screening, reducing stigma and the development of new therapeutics that may prevent disease transmission but also lead to normal life expectancy. Despite this progress, of the 1.2 million people living with HIV in the United States today, about 400 000 of them are not on regular HIV treatment, [according to a news post on Walmart's website](#). "At Walmart, we want to change that with access to education, services and resources. With more than 4600 pharmacies in the US and 90% of the US population located within 10 miles of a Walmart, we have an opportunity to reach people who might not otherwise have access to or seek out HIV care," the news post states.

UK: Pharmacists report shortages of strep A antibiotics

Pharmacists are reporting UK-wide shortages of the antibiotics used to treat strep A, despite the health secretary insisting that the government is "not

aware” of a problem, [the Guardian reports](#). Demand for penicillin and amoxicillin has increased in recent days as the number of cases of strep A has risen among children in schools. Independent pharmacies say they cannot replenish stocks of the antibiotics because wholesalers say there is no availability. The health secretary, Steve Barclay, told Times Radio on November 30 that officials were “not aware of any shortages” and that medicine manufacturers were “required to notify [officials] if there are supply issues, and we have not been notified by them of that.” Leyla Hannbeck, the chief executive of the Association of Independent Multiple Pharmacies, said pharmacists across the country were reporting that they could not restock many types of antibiotics and were dealing with angry customers who she said had been misled by the health secretary. “I want to make it very clear the frustration among health-care professionals because we don’t want to let our patients down, we have people coming in, parents, we just need to have better planning. Our hands are very tied,” she said.

UK: Community pharmacy ‘not in a position’ to step in during NHS strike, say sector leaders

Community pharmacy is “not in a position” to relieve pressure on the National Health Service (NHS) by taking on additional patient care during NHS strike action, the chair of the National Pharmacy Association has said. Andrew Lane joined other pharmacy leaders in warning that the community pharmacy sector is already overstretched and cannot provide additional services without extra funding, [the Pharmacist reports](#). This comes despite a report in the *Telegraph* last weekend suggesting that pharmacists might be asked to take on additional responsibilities during strike action, such as diagnosing patients with minor conditions and prescribing antibiotics. Janet Morrison, chief executive of the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee, explained that although pharmacies would be capable of supporting the NHS with more support, they are also struggling this winter. “Community pharmacy teams have repeatedly shown that they have the skills, ambition and accessibility to help support patients and the NHS through moments of crisis. But this winter, pharmacies are approaching their own crisis as years of underfunding, efficiency squeezes and workforce problems take their toll,” Morrison said. “Pharmacy teams are in the same position as their health service colleagues – exhausted, overworked, and struggling to make ends meet. If government wants pharmacies to step up again, they will need to back this with emergency funding and support.”

In Depth

Got a cold? It could protect you from other viruses—but only for a bit

Infectious disease experts say having 1 virus, like a common cold, could keep others at bay, as each bug effectively takes turns over the fall and winter. Now that some Canadians are mingling and travelling freely again, scientists have a rare opportunity to watch how the different respiratory pathogens we carry interact after a pandemic. Until now, most virus research has focused on just a single pathogen at a time, whether in an individual patient or a whole population. [CBC looks at](#) the early science into why we likely won't see multiple viruses hitting adults at the same time—and who may be more vulnerable to a double- or triple-whammy.

Worth Repeating

“We’re definitely in a better position today than we were 2 weeks ago. So, we’re encouraged to see the situation continue to improve, but it’s definitely highlighted the importance of securing and re-supporting our drug supply chain in the future.” —Jen Belcher, the Ontario Pharmacists Association’s vice-president of strategic initiatives and member relations, [on the current shortage](#) of children’s pain relief medication

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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