



The Weekly

Bringing the world of pharmacy together

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CPhA

CPhA update on baby formula shortage

Given the role of pharmacy in the sale of baby formula and pharmacists' experience in managing supply shortages, CPhA has played a leading role in Health Canada discussions in response to the [current supply shortage](#) to ensure pharmacy is represented in the conversations. This includes participation in 2 working groups established to focus on the issues of distribution and communications. Health Canada's recently updated interim policy on importation includes changes to its [current list of products](#), highlighting imported formulas that will soon be available to Canadians and printable labels and information for the imported products. Since we don't yet know how long this shortage will last, CPhA is encouraging pharmacists to consider measures to manage supply, including keeping specialty formula behind the counter, limiting purchases of regular formula and reserving specialty formulas, where possible. Additional resources to support health professionals are being developed, including a decision tree to assist in choosing alternative products. We will continue to monitor the situation, assess the need for resources to support pharmacists, and provide additional updates as new information becomes available.

CPhA appears before health committee for its study on COVID-19 pandemic

Dr. Danielle Paes, CPhA's chief pharmacist officer, appeared before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health on June 1 as a witness for its study on the emergency situation facing Canadians in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. CPhA's [remarks](#) focused on the

pandemic's impact on drug shortages and patient access to care across Canada. While COVID-19 has taken a devastating toll on Canadians, it has also brought about scope of practice changes and expanded services that have enabled pharmacists to better care for patients in their communities. Pharmacists now need support to maintain these positive changes in access to care.

National Indigenous History Month: Learning opportunities for pharmacists

June is National Indigenous History Month in Canada—a time to learn about and celebrate the rich history, cultures and contributions of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples, while also recognizing the ongoing trauma and harm experienced by Indigenous peoples and building a path toward reconciliation. The Truth and Reconciliation Special Interest Group of the Association of Faculties of Pharmacy of Canada—a CPhA member organization—is organizing a series of weekly 1-hour information sessions throughout the month for pharmacy professionals, students and faculty. The second session, “Making Territorial Acknowledgements More Meaningful” with Inuvialuk pharmacist Amber Ruben, is happening June 9 at 11 am ET. Learn more on the [CPhA website](#).

Pharmacy on the front lines

Manitoba pharmacy techs gain hands-on experience

There's no substitute for hands-on training. Recently, 21 first-year pharmacy technician students from the Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology (MITT) spent time with a state-of-the-art Pyxis MedStation, an experience that will greatly improve their transition to the workforce, [the Winnipeg Free Press reports](#). Rose Marie Sunga, a first-year student, spent 3 hours on the Pyxis MedStation—an automated medication dispensing system used in hospitals and long-term care facilities across Canada and the US—during a lab. “It’s very helpful,” Sunga said. After working as a pharmacist in the Philippines, Sunga moved to Winnipeg in July 2021, beginning her first year in MITT’s pharmacy technician program in the fall. “Back in the Philippines, I’d never used that technology before. So it was kind of amazing.” MITT’s pharmacy technician program is the only such program in Manitoba, and one of the only health programs that have this machine—the exact same one that students will see in industry. “In the diploma program at MITT, we are also taught how to enter prescriptions into pharmacy management software, and how to compound different medications, and how the drugs interact with one another,” Sunga added.

Provincial

AB pharmacies mandate time-delayed safes

Community drug stores across Alberta are now required to use time-delayed safes in an effort to protect staff and patients, and to help ensure drug supply security, the Alberta College of Pharmacy (ACP) said on June 6. The safes will be used to store narcotics and other high-risk drugs. The ACP updated its Standards for the Operation of Licensed Pharmacies in January to include the new requirement, which has now been met by most pharmacies in the province, ACP

spokesperson Brad Strader [told Okotoks Today](#). “We gave pharmacies a few months to get them installed, to make it all happen, so most pharmacies do have them installed now and within the next few weeks there will be full compliance across the province,” Strader said. The ACP worked with the RCMP, the Alberta Pharmacists’ Association working group, Calgary and Edmonton police services, and other stakeholders to help address the recent spike in robberies.

Competition Bureau resolves concerns with Neighbourly Pharmacy acquisition in SK

The Competition Bureau has [reached an agreement](#) with Neighbourly Pharmacy to resolve competition concerns related to its proposed acquisition of Rubicon Pharmacies in Western Canada. The Bureau concluded the proposed transaction would likely substantially lessen competition in the supply of pharmacy products and services in 2 towns in Saskatchewan—Kamsack and Shaunavon, as Neighbourly and Rubicon operate the only 2 pharmacies in these towns. To resolve the Bureau’s concerns, Neighbourly Pharmacy has agreed to sell 1 of the 2 pharmacies in each town.

NB to cover pharmacists’ fees for services related to birth control and shingles

Fees that pharmacists charge to prescribe patients birth control and to assess and treat people for shingles are now covered by provincial Medicare, [according to a government news release](#). “Our model for primary health care is outdated and leaves too many New Brunswickers without access,” said Health Minister Dorothy Shephard. “Expanding the role of pharmacists and other health-care providers will have a big impact on evolving our system to one that, no matter where someone enters the system, they are able to access the care they need.” Andrew Drover, president of the New Brunswick Pharmacists’ Association, said the public funding for these 2 new pharmacist services will significantly improve access to care. “Pharmacists are vital, accessible health-care providers who can help transform primary care in New Brunswick,” he said. “We look forward to finding more ways that pharmacists can help ease the burden on family physicians and emergency rooms while making it easier for patients to access the health care they need.”

National

It’s ‘high time’ that authorities revise definition of ‘fully vaccinated’: experts

As more evidence emerges on the efficacy of third doses of the COVID-19 vaccine, experts say it’s high time public health authorities revise the definition of “fully vaccinated” to include a booster dose, [CTV reports](#). While most COVID-19 vaccines available in Canada were initially developed and tested to include 2 doses—with the exception of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine—a primary course should instead consist of 3 doses, said Colin Furness, an expert in infectious disease epidemiology from the University of Toronto. “Someone who’s only had 2 shots will say, ‘I’m fully vaccinated,’ and that’s what the authorities are saying, [but] the authorities have got it wrong,” Furness said. “When we look at the diminishment of immunity after the second dose, really, this is a 3-dose vaccine.”

CFP names new executive director

The Canadian Foundation for Pharmacy (CFP) [announced](#) the appointment of its new Executive Director, Paul Kidston, effective June 1. Kidston brings with him a wealth of experience in board governance and community leadership, as well as expertise in helping organizations build revenue-generating capacity. He has led several change-management improvement health-care projects throughout his career, including in the pharmaceutical and optometry industries. He has also served on numerous boards, including the Kidney Foundation of Canada and Feed Nova Scotia. Former Executive Director Dayle Acorn will be retiring. Since starting with CFP in 2007, Acorn has been a tremendous asset in championing the foundation's mission to support and promote pharmacy innovation to advance the profession. During his 15-year tenure—the longest of any CFP executive director—he has worked with over 50 board members and helped to secure \$2 million in research grants used to support numerous, often high-impact, pharmacy initiatives.

International

US: Majority of pharmacists prepared to administer COVID-19 vaccine to children under 5, APhA survey finds

A recent [survey](#) conducted by the American Pharmacists Association (APhA) suggests the majority of pharmacists (66%) would be prepared to administer COVID-19 vaccines to children under 5 years old if authorized to do so. Nearly half of respondents (44%) said they are currently planning to vaccinate based on community needs and abilities of pharmacy teams following authorization and guidance from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). However, pharmacists' level of vaccination engagement for this age group will be an individual practice and practitioner decision. "The data show that pharmacists are again poised to contribute to our nation's health efforts and vaccinate all Americans against COVID-19," said Scott Knoer, former APhA executive vice-president and CEO. "This has been true since the first COVID-19 vaccines arrived in December 2020, and it continues to be the case today despite the enormous challenges facing pharmacists in every practice venue."

US: APhA changes executive leadership

Dr. Ilisa Bernstein has been named interim CEO of the board of trustees of the American Pharmacists Association (APhA), effective immediately, [according to a news release](#). Bernstein's appointment follows the departure of Scott Knoer as executive vice-president and CEO. "We have full confidence in Ilisa's leadership as interim CEO during the transition period," said APhA president Theresa Tolle. "She brings a passion for pharmacists and pharmacy and a proven record of success strategically leading people and policies—just what is needed to drive APhA's leadership for the profession." Bernstein will tap into her decades of leadership and strategy experience as she transitions into this new role. For the past 2 years, Bernstein has served as APhA's senior vice-president of pharmacy practice and government affairs, leading the association's advocacy and pharmacy practice efforts.

US: FTC launches inquiry into prescription drug middlemen industry

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) will launch an inquiry into the prescription drug middlemen industry, requiring the 6 largest pharmacy benefit managers to provide information and records regarding their business practices, [according to a news release](#). The agency's inquiry will scrutinize the impact of vertically integrated pharmacy benefit managers on the access and affordability of prescription drugs. As part of this inquiry, the FTC will send compulsory orders to CVS Caremark, Express Scripts, OptumRx, Humana, Prime Therapeutics and MedImpact Healthcare Systems. "Although many people have never heard of pharmacy benefit managers, these powerful middlemen have enormous influence over the US prescription drug system," said FTC Chair Lina Khan. "This study will shine a light on these companies' practices and their impact on pharmacies, payers, doctors, and patients."

UK: FIP officers appointed to guide professional leadership

Two International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) officers—CEO Catherine Duggan and Vice-President Ashok Soni—have been appointed to a new UK Commission on Pharmacy Professional Leadership, the National Health Service (NHS) [announced](#) on June 7. Duggan and Soni join the chief pharmaceutical officers for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, among others, to produce recommendations for the future of pharmacy, ensuring pharmacists and pharmacy technicians are "well equipped with a voice to help shape the future."

Ireland: Regulatory body says pharmacist 'guilty of misconduct' over social media posts on abortion pills

A pharmacist has been found guilty of professional misconduct over controversial comments she posted on Facebook about abortion and the potential impact of the 2018 constitutional amendment to legalize the termination of pregnancy in Ireland, [the Irish Independent reports](#). Aileen D'Arcy, a hospital pharmacist, was censured by the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (PSI) following an inquiry by the regulatory body's Professional Conduct Committee. D'Arcy had claimed that, if passed, the referendum would mean that "people like me, a pharmacist, will be forced to be complicit in the taking of a child's life in the womb." In comments posted on the Facebook page of the *Irish Times* in May 2018, shortly before the referendum, D'Arcy added: "Why should your opinion and another person's sex life affect mine?" A recently published report by the PSI shows the inquiry, held last September, found the pharmacist guilty of professional misconduct after using "inflammatory and inappropriate" language to express her views about abortion and the role of pharmacists in supplying medicines to terminate a pregnancy. It also ruled D'Arcy's actions represented a breach of the code of conduct for pharmacists as they were "disgraceful and dishonourable in a professional respect."

Australia: 'Patchwork approach': Pharmacists call for simpler free flu shot initiative

Pharmacists say the federal government should consider funding flu vaccines for all Australians in the future, with a confusing "patchwork" system now determining where different age groups can receive a free shot after states stepped in to boost uptake, [the Sydney Morning Herald reports](#). For the month of June, New South Wales and other state governments are covering the

cost of flu shots at pharmacies and general practitioner clinics for people aged 5 to 64 who were not previously eligible to receive the vaccine for free under the federal government's program. While the new system means everyone can now receive a free vaccine, Chris Freeman, the president of the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA), said it was confusing that people previously eligible for free shots were required to get them from a doctor, as pharmacy shots were not included in the program. Freeman encouraged the newly elected federal government to consider extending the national program for at-risk persons to pharmacies, and even make flu shots free for all in the future. "It makes sense in an era where we are being challenged by infectious diseases to have a whole-population approach," he said.

In Depth

Canada's drug price controls hurt both innovation and Canadians' access to medication: MLI paper

In the latest [Macdonald-Laurier Institute \(MLI\) paper](#)—"The kindest cut: Excising the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board from the Canadian body politic"—Richard C. Owens, Rebecca Rosenberg and Haya Sardar evaluate the policy of drug price controls, their constitutionality, and the effect they have on access to medication and medical innovation. The paper argues the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board (PMPRB) lacks a constitutional foundation. The federal government may have the power to correct or penalize patent abuse, but the PMPRB does not address patent abuse. Instead, the authors suggest the PMPRB's actions amount to industrial price controls, which are a provincial rather than a federal power.

'Pink tape' at the FDA is delaying access to contraception—again

As the crisis over access to reproductive health deepens in the US, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has been quietly working with 2 pharmaceutical companies pursuing a historic breakthrough in expanding access to contraception—eliminating the unnecessary barrier of a prescription for the birth control pill and allowing people to purchase it directly. The safety and effectiveness of the pill has been well established during its 62 years on the market. That means the FDA has to decide only 2 things to move forward with making it an over-the-counter product: Can women understand the label on the packaging, and can they be trusted to follow the label instructions to determine whether these products are right for them? Answering those questions seems straightforward. So why is the FDA moving at an excruciatingly slow pace? [STAT examines](#) the government's history of bias and interference when evaluating earlier contraceptive products for over-the-counter use.

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.

Canadian Pharmacists Association
1785 Alta Vista Drive, Ottawa, ON K1G 3Y6

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