



Canadian
Pharmacists
Association

Association des
pharmaciens
du Canada

The Weekly

Bringing the world of pharmacy together

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CPhA

It's Pharmacy Appreciation Month! We're celebrating and here's how you can too

March is [Pharmacy Appreciation Month](#) (PAM) in Canada—the annual national campaign that shines a spotlight on all things pharmacy and celebrates the growing role pharmacy professionals play in our health-care system. This PAM, we're celebrating our pharmacy teams and highlighting to everyone that the power of pharmacy is *you*—the amazing individuals who have been there for their communities time and time again. Here's how you can help us celebrate this month:

- **Be part of our PAM campaign** – Want to be featured in our PAM materials on social media? [Email us](#) a picture of yourself or your pharmacy team in action, with the name and location (city and province/territory) of your pharmacy and the full names of any team members in the photo.
- **Share our #MyFavePharm patient contest** – We're asking patients to tell us why they love their pharmacy team by filling out a nomination form for a chance to win a tablet for themselves and their favourite pharmacy

team member. Share the [contest link](#) with your network or display a [promotional poster](#) at the pharmacy.

- **Celebrate your team on the PAM 2023 Kudoboard** – Share stories, photos, congratulations or thanks to your team and pharmacy colleagues for the incredible work they do every day on this [virtual appreciation wall](#).

For more information on how you can get involved, check out our [communications toolkit](#), join the conversation on social media using the hashtag #PAM2023 and stay tuned for some exciting announcements throughout the month!

Dr. Danielle Paes discusses how the role of pharmacy is growing to meet our health-care needs

In a [Q&A with Mediaplanet](#) for Pharmacy Appreciation Month, CPhA's Chief Pharmacist Officer Dr. Danielle Paes discussed how she's helping to support and advance the pharmacy profession to meet Canada's growing health-care needs. "Pharmacy is becoming increasingly relevant to our vision for health care transformation in Canada. As more and more new authorities and funding for pharmacy services become available, pharmacists are growing in their roles—as immunizers, as prescribers, and as the first point of contact to the health care system for patients across the country," she said. "I'm hopeful that we'll soon see pharmacists in every corner of the country practising to their full scope so that everyone has access to the same level of care and service no matter what province they live in."

International Women's Day: Meet some of the women in pharmacy who inspire us

Happy International Women's Day! To celebrate, [we've asked](#) pharmacy professionals on social media, "Who are the women of pharmacy that inspire you?" For inspiration, check out some of our recent Pharmacy Check-in conversations with women in pharmacy who inspire us. Meet [Areen Duqoum](#), [Helen Ali](#), [Christine Amoko](#), [Afomia Gebre](#), [Susie Jin](#), [Nafisa Merali](#), and [Shams Qaend](#).

2023 Canadian Pharmacy Mental Health and Workforce Wellness Survey

CPhA is asking pharmacists and pharmacy technicians to complete the 2023 edition of the Canadian Pharmacy Mental Health and Workforce Wellness Survey. With over 1400 responses, the 2022 survey provided pharmacy with important information to advocate for the well-being of the profession over the past year. The results from this year's survey will help the pharmacy community further understand how, and if, the state of the profession has changed since last year and direct continued efforts to improve pharmacy professionals' well-being. Please take the survey in [English](#) or [French](#).

From surviving to thriving: The current state of pharmacy workforce wellness and where we go from here

Over the past 3 years, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, pharmacy teams have taken on a more prominent role in supporting their patients and communities. We've risen to meet growing public demand for pharmacist services and have embraced a greater role in public health with an unwavering "can do" attitude. But it has come at a cost—our workforce is in crisis and pharmacy professionals are experiencing stress and risk of burnout at unprecedented levels. During a [March 2 session organized by the University of Toronto's Centre for Practice Excellence](#), CPhA's Chief Pharmacist Officer, Dr. Danielle Paes, shared some sobering national survey results that offer insight into pharmacists' current levels of mental health and well-being. If you missed the live event, the recording is available [here](#).

Pharmacy on the front lines

USask student dreams of opening a pharmacy and providing patient-centred care in an Indigenous community

Sasha Merasty, a University of Saskatchewan student enrolled in the Doctor of Pharmacy program, was inspired to pursue a career in pharmacy after she experienced positive interactions with pharmacists and now aspires to open a pharmacy in an Indigenous community. "I want my future pharmacy to encourage hiring Indigenous people—in particular, those who have persevered through troubling times because I believe that resilience builds empathy, which is important for patient-centred pharmacy care," she [told USask News](#). "Dedication to patient-centred care will begin with me, because I have had a lot of life experiences that I utilize to make myself a better pharmacist and

advocate for vulnerable populations.” Merasty, born and raised in Saskatoon, is a member of Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation. As a child, she said became accustomed to being in and around hospitals because several of her family members were hospitalized. “Because I was so young, I had no idea what was happening to my family members in medical terms, but it created a passion in me to know all about medications and medical conditions so I would never feel that way again,” Merasty said. “I want to be a pharmacist because I have a passion to help people.”

Provincial

Northern Ontario pharmacies concerned about not getting medications on time from their supplier

For several months, medication deliveries from distributor McKesson Canada have been arriving late to Mo Mousa’s Iroquois Falls, Ontario, pharmacy. The company, which supplies medication to over 7000 pharmacies across the country, promises next-day delivery at all of the thousands of pharmacies it supplies—something Mousa said has held true for his store until recently. Now, he said deliveries from his distributor often arrive after the store’s already closed. “[It’s] leaving the patients frustrated, leaving us frustrated, having to explain everything to the patients,” Mousa [told CTV News](#). “[And] it’s jeopardizing their health, putting them at risk of more complications.” It’s an issue facing all 3 pharmacies in the Northern Ontario town as a result of McKesson changing its delivery route, which places Iroquois Falls at the end of the delivery line. “Patients are upset, they don’t know what to do because we have only 3 pharmacies in town and we don’t know until the last minute, if you are getting that medication or not,” said Ram Rare, another Iroquois Falls pharmacist. The pharmacists said they’ve made several attempts to ask McKesson to improve its service. Already struggling with a shortage of certain medicines, the pharmacists said this is the last problem they should be dealing with right now.

OPA partners with Box Labs to offer advanced cloud-based pharmacy management solutions

The Ontario Pharmacists Association (OPA) is now the lead investor in Box Labs’ cloud-based pharmacy management solution, [according to a March 7](#)

[news release](#). Box Labs offers a simple, efficient and powerful pharmacy suite that automatically identifies new opportunities for enhancing patient care at booking, service provision and point of sale. The unique, streamlined workflow also allows clients to register and complete all relevant forms online through the user-friendly service scheduling module. “We’re thrilled to advance our partnership with Box Labs, highlighting that OPA is at the forefront of innovation for the benefit of our members and patients,” said Tim Brady, pharmacist and chair of OPA’s Board of Directors. “As health systems increasingly leverage pharmacy professionals’ expertise and accessibility, digital health tools and applications like Box Labs drive agility and responsiveness. This ground-breaking partnership paves the way for more efficient delivery of services.”

In small Alberta communities, the struggle to recruit pharmacists is real

Small communities across Alberta are struggling to recruit pharmacists for vacant positions, [CBC reports](#). Zicki Eludin, 72, doesn’t want to continue running the Crescent IDA Drugs pharmacy in Lac La Biche—a hamlet of 2300 people 210 kilometres northeast of Edmonton—but can’t find someone to replace him. He’s been trying to hire someone for 3 years and says not a single pharmacist has applied for the position. “It’s impossible to get pharmacists to Lac La Biche,” said Eludin. “I used to put in a job opening, and I would get dozens of applications. I don’t even get 1 now.” Towns and villages across Alberta are facing a pharmacist shortage, according to the Alberta College of Pharmacy (ACP), which oversees pharmacy practice in the province. There is greater per-capita demand for pharmacists in small communities, according to ACP registrar Greg Eberhart, which risks putting excessive stress on the few pharmacists working in rural areas and exacerbating the shortage. Tofield pharmacist and Alberta Pharmacists’ Association board member Darren Erickson has also struggled to recruit employees. After posting an opening at his pharmacy last year, Erickson said he waited months before receiving a single application. “New grads do not seem to want to leave the city,” he said. “It seems like the further you get away from the city centre, the bigger the problem is.”

NACI recommends high-risk individuals get another COVID-19 booster shot this spring

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) says people at a high risk of serious illness should get another COVID-19 booster shot in the spring, [CTV News reports](#). People aged 80 and older, people aged 65 to 79 (particularly those who've never had COVID), people living in long-term care homes or other congregate living situations, and people aged 18 and older who are immunocompromised are encouraged to book a vaccine appointment. NACI also recommends that anyone who hasn't gotten a COVID-19 booster shot in the fall of 2022 get one as soon as possible. Dr. Theresa Tam, Canada's chief public health officer, said an additional booster is not being recommended for the general population this spring, given the "relatively stable disease activity we have observed in recent months, and generally high levels of antibodies against COVID-19 from vaccines and/or infection among Canadians." NACI said it's continuing to monitor COVID-19 and may make additional vaccine recommendations in the fall, "depending on the COVID-19 pandemic context."

International

US: Walgreens won't sell abortion pills in 20 states, including some where they're legal

Walgreens will not distribute abortion pills in several states where abortion is legal, denying access to federally approved medications amid political and legal threats from the anti-abortion movement and state Republican leaders, [the Washington Post reports](#). The pharmacy chain's decision to withhold sales of mifepristone in Alaska, Iowa, Kansas and Montana threatens to further squeeze access to abortion since the Supreme Court struck down *Roe v. Wade*, dramatically reducing the options for terminating a pregnancy in the United States. Health-care companies have been forced into the role of health-care arbiters, balancing the job of dispensing approved medications against a thicket of issues, including legal risks and corporate reputation. In early January, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) said it would allow bricks-and-mortar drugstores to seek certification to fill prescriptions for the drug mifepristone. In response, 20 Republican state attorneys general warned of legal action if the drugstore chain offered the medication in their states. "This is

a very complex and in-flux area of the law and we are taking that into account as we seek certification to dispense mifepristone,” Walgreens spokesperson Fraser Engerman said in an email on March 2, adding that Walgreens does not currently carry the drug. CVS, Rite Aid, Walmart and Costco did not comment on whether they would also deny access to abortion pills in some states where abortion is legal.

US: Ozempic shortages? Some pharmacists are choosing not to stock the drug at all

While many pharmacists across the US have struggled to get their hands on Ozempic, some haven't bothered, [according to NBC News](#). Nate Hux, the owner of Pickerington Pharmacy in Ohio, stopped stocking the diabetes drug—which has soared in popularity, particularly for its off-label use as a weight loss aid—last summer. At that time, there were widespread shortages of Ozempic, but that's not what drove Hux to ditch the drug. Instead, he said, it was because selling the medication was hurting his business. The average wholesale price of Ozempic that pharmacies pay is about US\$900 (CAD\$1238) for a 30-day supply, he said. But Hux said for each prescription, he was typically reimbursed just US\$860 (CAD\$1863). “It is too expensive for us to stock,” he said. Hux is among a group of independent pharmacists who have stopped carrying Ozempic and other drugs in the same class, in part, they say, because of the underpayments by pharmacy benefits managers who act as middlemen between pharmacists and insurers. These drugs, called GLP-1 agonists, are relatively new and still under patent, meaning there are no generic alternatives. The development adds a twist to the Ozempic saga in the US, where many patients over the last year have been forced to visit multiple pharmacies in search of the drug, which has been difficult to find because of shortages.

US: Drugmaker Eli Lilly slashes prices, will offer \$35 insulin in US pharmacies

Eli Lilly and Co., one of the largest drug manufacturers in the world, announced on March 1 that it will cut prices for some of its most commonly prescribed insulin products—a move that could potentially provide instant relief to millions of Americans struggling to buy the life-saving diabetes medication, [Global News reports](#). List prices for the drugs Humalog and Humulin will drop 70% during the year's fourth quarter, which starts in October. The Indianapolis-based drugmaker is also promising to offer a low-cost insulin injection for just

US\$25 (CAD\$35) per vial and will expand its existing US\$35 (CAD\$50) cap on some insulin products to 85% of US pharmacies. The move comes after US President Joe Biden pushed for a universal US\$35 cap on out-of-pocket insulin costs during the annual State of the Union address last month. “While we could wait for Congress to act or the health-care system in general to apply that standard, we’re just applying it ourselves,” Eli Lilly’s chief executive Dave Ricks [told CNN](#). Biden applauded the move as “a big deal,” calling on other pharmaceutical companies to cut drug costs.

UK: Hundreds of community pharmacies ‘could close due to rising costs’

When Amish Patel followed his father into the pharmacy business, he hoped it would be a job for life. But with the cost of everything from medicines to energy rising, it has become increasingly difficult to pay the bills, he [told Sky News](#). Like other community pharmacies, Patel’s Kent pharmacy is a private contractor that receives the vast majority of its income from the NHS. A 5-year contract was agreed with NHS England and the government in 2019, but pharmacists say it’s no match for the rise in prices. “We’ve been left with a contract that doesn’t take into account any inflation or any cost of living,” said Leyla Hannbeck, chief executive of the Association of Independent Multiple Pharmacies. “Pharmacies are under a lot of pressure at the moment, all pharmacies are. The cost of medicines is rising, they simply do not have the funding to keep them afloat.” Hannbeck’s organization estimates that since 2015, 800 pharmacies have closed their doors permanently and that 600 more may close this year alone.

Australia: ACT plans for pharmacists to administer UTI medication, while expanded scope for immunizations comes this month

The Australian Capital Territory (ACT) government has announced plans to allow pharmacists to provide over-the-counter medication for urinary tract infections (UTIs), [ABC News reports](#). From the middle of the year, the ACT will join a trial currently being run by the New South Wales government allowing pharmacists to prescribe antibiotics to treat uncomplicated UTIs in women. “Enabling pharmacists to assess and initiate treatment for women with uncomplicated urinary tract infections is expected to help patients access treatment more quickly and reduce pressure on other primary healthcare providers,” ACT Health Minister Rachel Stephen-Smith said in a statement. Under a separate change that will come into effect by the middle of March,

Canberra pharmacists will also be able to administer a wider range of vaccines for hepatitis A and B, typhoid and herpes without needing to see a physician. Pharmacists can already administer vaccines including influenza, tetanus and COVID-19, but the ACT government said the expansion would improve access to immunization and better help protect Canberrans from preventable diseases. The decision has been applauded by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, which described the government decision as a “win” for the territory. “With nearly 2000 people presenting to emergency in the ACT for an uncomplicated UTI in a 12-month period recently, I think it demonstrates there is a need to continue to have evolution of the health system,” ACT branch president Simon Blacker said.

In Depth

The end of COVID-19 rapid testing? What Ottawa’s call to scrap shipment means

Almost 3 years into the COVID-19 pandemic, testing for the coronavirus is becoming less common, and less relevant, in Canada, experts say. The federal government scrapped pre-arrival PCR test requirements for travellers in February 2022. Now, it’s ending new shipments of rapid antigen tests to provinces and territories. [Global News explains](#) what this means.

Worth Repeating

“Time and time again pharmacy teams demonstrate their value and their commitment to the communities they call home. I’m proud to call you all my colleagues and friends. I thank you all for the tireless work [and] wishing you all the best this Pharmacy Appreciation Month” —A [tweet](#) from Regina pharmacist Paraag Trivedi (@RXTrivedi) ringing in PAM on March 1

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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