



Canadian  
Pharmacists  
Association

Association des  
pharmaciens  
du Canada

# The Weekly

Bringing the world of pharmacy together

**August 11, 2021**

## **CPhA**

### ***CPhA supports mandatory vaccinations for health-care workers***

In a [statement released last week](#), CPhA added its voice to organizations advocating for mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations for health-care workers. The statement says: “As one of the health professions leading the charge to vaccinate Canadians against COVID-19, CPhA strongly supports mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations for health care workers. As the pace of our vaccination rollout slows across the country and we are faced with more concerning variants heading into the fall, it’s vital that we do all we can to protect our communities and reach unvaccinated Canadians. Ensuring all our front-line health care workers are vaccinated is an important step in protecting patients and the capacity of our health care system.”

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## **Provincial**

### ***Alberta pharmacists help protect the environment through ENVIRx program***

Through the ENVIRx program partnership, pharmacists in Alberta promote safe and effective medication use, while providing Albertans with an environmentally responsible way to return unused and expired medications, also referred to as “dead drugs,” through their local community pharmacy, [according to a news release from the Alberta Pharmacists’ Association \(RxA\)](#). Last year, the ENVIRx program collected more than 100 tonnes of dead drugs and used needles, keeping these products out of landfills and groundwater. The release comes in time for National Drug Drop-off Month in August, which encourages Canadians to drop off their unused

medications at their local pharmacy for environmentally safe disposal.

### ***Alberta pharmacist frustrated at having to throw out unused COVID-19 vaccine***

An Alberta pharmacist says he had to throw out 120 doses of expired Moderna COVID-19 vaccine—and that more doses are being wasted every day. Each vial of Moderna has 14 doses, and once opened, the entire bottle needs to be used within 24 hours, Chris Aingworth [told CBC News](#). He says demand has dropped significantly at his pharmacy in Sundre, 120 km north of Calgary, with only 2 or 3 people a day getting the shot. “We’ll open up the vial, give the shot and then just hope that more people come in so that we can use up the excess,” Aingworth says. He adds it would help if the province allowed pharmacists to order less than the current minimum batch of 140 doses. The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) says it is working on options for leftover doses, which includes potential donations to other countries.

### ***Thousands of Moderna doses will likely be thrown out due to declining demand: OPA***

The Ontario Pharmacists Association (OPA) says pharmacists in the province will likely have to throw out thousands of expired Moderna doses over the course of this week and the next due to declining demand, [CBC reports](#). Vials of Moderna can be stored in the freezer for up to 6 months, but they arrive in a thawed state at pharmacies and can last in the fridge for only 30 days, according to the association’s CEO, Justin Bates. And, once a vial is punctured to withdraw a dose, the remaining doses—typically around 13—expire in 24 hours. Bates says another hurdle is that some people who got the Pfizer vaccine for their first shot are refusing to get Moderna for their second dose because some countries—including the US—don’t recognize people with mixed doses as being fully vaccinated.

### ***Virtual learning project immerses students in pharmacy work environment***

A virtual learning strategy project from University of Toronto’s Leslie Dan Faculty of Pharmacy involves creating virtual simulations for pharmacy and pharmacy technician students. [U of T News says](#) the simulations are designed to immerse students in pharmacy work environments, hone their skills, and generally help them get a feel for the types of interactions that take place between pharmacy and other health professionals and patients. Recent regulatory changes expanding pharmacists’ scope of practice in Ontario has created a need for educational tools that reflect the competencies expected of the different professions and foster collaborative practice.

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## **National**

### ***Health Minister announces signing of pharmacare agreement with PEI ahead of expected federal election***

Federal Health Minister Patty Hajdu announced today the signing of an agreement that will improve access to and make prescription drugs more affordable in PEI, [CBC reports](#). The announcement, made at a Charlottetown pharmacy, will see the province of PEI receive \$35 million over 4 years in federal funding to add new drugs to its list of covered drugs and lower out

of pocket costs for drugs covered under existing public plans. According to Hajdu, this is the first agreement in its ongoing efforts to advance national universal pharmacare within the provinces. The type of targeted investment made in PEI is aligned with CPhA's position of allowing provinces to close the gaps as they see fit for their own provincial context. As the national voice of pharmacists across the country, CPhA supports a universal mixed payer pharmacare model that is patient-centered and increases access for all Canadians.

### ***Feds silent on WHO-requested moratorium on COVID booster shots***

The federal government isn't saying whether Canada will hold off on administering booster shots of COVID vaccines for the next 2 months, as the head of the World Health Organization (WHO) called for on August 4, [according to iPolitics](#). WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus called on countries—and specifically wealthy nations that lead the world in vaccinating their citizens against COVID—to hold off on administering booster shots until September is over to allow other countries to acquire the vaccines they need to speed up their rollouts. In addition, scientists haven't reached a consensus yet about whether COVID vaccine boosters will be needed. "There's not enough data to suggest that in Canada we would go into boosting as of yet," Canada's Chief Public Health Officer Dr. Theresa Tam says. "But, it is something that we're watching very carefully."

### ***Moderna to build mRNA production plant in Canada within 2 years***

Massachusetts-based drug maker Moderna will build an mRNA vaccine manufacturing plant in Canada within the next 2 years, [the Canadian Press reports](#). The company has signed a memorandum of understanding with the federal government that will result in Canada hosting Moderna's first foreign operation. But it's not yet clear how much money Canada has offered to Moderna for the project. "I believe that this technology can allow Canada to be ready for the next virus," Moderna CEO Stéphane Bancel said at an announcement in Montreal. The agreement will see Canada gain access to Moderna's mRNA "development engine" and get priority access to the doses.

### ***Point of care pilot begins at SDM for patients with diabetic conditions***

Participating Shoppers Drug Mart (SDM) pharmacies will begin offering screening tests to patients with known conditions associated with pre-diabetes, or already identified as diabetic, to provide diagnostic support and pharmacist-led consultation services, [according to a news release from Avricore Health](#). "We are committed to improving access to care through our pharmacy network and enabling our pharmacists to drive improved patient outcomes by providing value added patient care services," says Frank Hack, director of complex care at SDM. In May 2021, Avricore signed an agreement with SDM to pilot the HealthTab platform, which allows patients access to point-of-care blood screening and health-data management for potential risks for developing diabetes and cardiovascular conditions.

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## **International**

### ***US: Walgreens sees surge in US COVID-19 vaccinations in recent weeks***

Pharmacy chain Walgreens Boots Alliance said on August 5 it had administered more than 29 million COVID-19 vaccines at its stores so far, led by a surge in parts of the United States that had lagged in vaccinations, [Reuters reports](#). Vaccine administration rose more than 30% in states such as Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky and Texas in the past few weeks, the company said. Cases of COVID-19, along with hospitalizations and deaths, increased in the US in past 2 weeks, even as the pace of vaccinations increased amid concerns over the highly contagious Delta variant.

#### ***US: CVS stops giving J&J COVID-19 vaccines in pharmacies***

CVS Health has stopped offering Johnson & Johnson's single-dose COVID-19 vaccine in its pharmacies, now making the shots available in roughly only 10% of its retail locations, [the company told CNBC](#). The pharmacy chain said customers can still get the shots at almost 1,000 MinuteClinic locations in 25 states and Washington D.C., which provide non-emergency medical care, diagnostic tests and vaccines inside some of the company's pharmacies. CVS pharmacies will continue to offer the 2-dose Pfizer and Moderna COVID vaccines nationwide, according to a CVS spokesperson.

#### ***US: Pharmacies see boost in testing as Canadian border opens to vaccinated Americans***

Local pharmacies like Condo Pharmacy in Plattsburgh, NY, saw a boost in testing over the weekend with lines out the door ahead of the Canadian border opening to fully vaccinated Americans on August 9, [WCAX TV reports](#). The pharmacy has only so many tests in its inventory, so they are asking people to call ahead and make an appointment to get a test if they want one. The pharmacy's Steve Moore says they did plan ahead and order more tests than usual but that once the tests are gone, they're gone. In Buffalo, NY, Lisa and Jim Docherty got COVID-19 tests at a pharmacy for their first visit to their Ontario cottage since the summer of 2019, [the Associated Press reports](#). The pharmacy clinic was charging \$140 (US) for same-day tests and \$125 (US) for delivery of results in 24 to 48 hours. "At this point, we'll just do whatever we have to do," Lisa Docherty said before heading in for a nasal swab.

#### ***Australia: Australian visas for pharmacists to be fast-tracked to support troubled vaccine rollout***

The Australian government will fast-track the visas of pharmacists to support the nation's ongoing COVID-19 vaccine rollout, [according to SBS News](#). Immigration Minister Alex Hawke announced the occupation would be added to the Priority Migration Skilled Occupation List (PMSOL), which outlines priority visa processing. The decision comes as thousands of pharmacies across Australia are invited to join the vaccine rollout to help accelerate the program. In other news, the Australian government has secured 25 million Moderna doses, with the first million expected for pharmacists to arrive in September, [the Australian Journal of Pharmacy reports](#).

#### ***UK: Want to see a GP? You could be sent to a pharmacy under new pilot***

People calling their GP's office for an appointment with a doctor or nurse could be referred to a pharmacist, [according to Leicestershire Live](#). A new initiative being rolled out in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland will help GPs focus on patients with more urgent needs. Some patients will be referred, usually by a receptionist, directly to a community pharmacist trained to advise on minor ailments. "Pharmacists are qualified to deal with a whole range of ailments, including bites and stings, swelling and pain, skin conditions, colds, coughs, earache and gastric problems," says Satyan Kotecha, a community pharmacist in Belgrave and vice-chair of the Leicester/Leicestershire/Rutland Pharmaceutical Committee. National Health Service (NHS) England estimates that between 6% and 8% of consultations with nurses and GPs could be transferred over to a community pharmacist instead, freeing up 55 appointments per week for each GP.

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## In-Depth

### ***Calls are growing for mandatory COVID-19 vaccines in health-care workers***

Should the doctor caring for you or a sick loved one be expected to have had a COVID-19 vaccine? What about the nurse changing your IV, the midwife delivering your baby, or the personal care worker looking after your immune-compromised parent or child who can't get the shot for themselves? [Global News examines these questions](#) as the COVID-19 pandemic increasingly becomes a pandemic of the unvaccinated, and as vaccine holdouts appear poised to become the primary drivers of new infections amid a surge in the highly contagious Delta variant.

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This weekly COVID-19 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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