



Canadian
Pharmacists
Association
Association des
pharmaciens
du Canada

The Weekly

Bringing the world of pharmacy together

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CPhA

Canadian pharmacists launch 2021 federal election priorities

CPhA released its [2021 federal election priorities](#) calling on all parties and candidates to demonstrate their commitment to the health of Canadians by acting on a series of 5 critical issues that will strengthen our health-care system now and into the future. CPhA recommends that candidates seeking election during this campaign champion the following issues:

- A national COVID-19 testing strategy
- Addressing the opioid crisis through safe opioid prescribing and use
- Improving access to key health services for Indigenous beneficiaries of NIHB
- Implementing universal pharmacare
- Drug shortages: Ensuring a stable drug supply

Alongside these priorities, CPhA has created other election-related resources: a [presentation deck](#), a [leave-behind](#), which includes a summary of the recommendations, and an [election toolkit](#) with tips and information for pharmacists interested in getting involved.

Pharmacy on the front line

Local pharmacies offer free naloxone kits and training

Kingston, Ontario, residents can now receive free naloxone kits and training at Shoppers Drug

Mart (SDM) locations around the city, [the Whig-Standard reports](#). SDM pharmacists can walk those interested through the muscular injection and nasal procedures, and will provide kits without a prescription to those who complete the training. “Our pharmacists are fully trained and can go over the process in detail and answer any questions or concerns that people may have,” said Adam Doyle, a SDM pharmacist-owner. Doyle hopes people take advantage of this opportunity to make a difference. “[We’re trying] to bring awareness to the dangers associated with opioids, but also educate people on how to react in a situation where they can potentially save someone’s life,” he said. Education is more critical now than ever because opioids come in several deadly forms. The abuse of street drugs tainted with fentanyl and the misuse of prescription opioids can end in a life-threatening overdose.

Provincial

23 Calgary pharmacies robbed since June

Police are warning businesses and looking for suspects after almost 2 dozen Calgary pharmacies have been robbed within about 2 months, [according to CBC](#). Police say there have been 23 pharmacy heists reported across Calgary since June. In most of the incidents, the robbers approached pharmacy employees while brandishing a weapon—or indicating that they had a weapon—before demanding money and pharmaceutical drugs. Although “all types” of pharmacies had been hit, smaller shops seemed to have been targeted. “One of the concerning pieces is that a number of them [have targeted] quite small, sort of more independent pharmacies, where there might be less people or less security measures,” said Inspector Philip Hoetger, the head of the robbery unit. While some of the heists appear to be related, Hoetger said police are still working to find out more and where the drugs are going. “It does appear to be certainly related to illicit drug use, but at the same time, one of the things we’re really trying to figure out... is what the bigger picture is,” he said.

National

How many lives did Canada’s COVID-19 Alert app save? This new study did the math

An independent analysis of the federal government’s COVID Alert smartphone app concludes that over a 5-month period, it reduced the number of cases in Canada by between 6,284 and 10,894—and saved between 57 and 101 lives—but that few Canadians actually used it, [the Toronto Star reports](#). “With even relatively modest adoption, as in Newfoundland and Labrador, our modelling suggests that the COVID Alert app was able to avert a substantial proportion of cases,” Erica Moodie, a biostatistics professor at McGill University and one of the researchers involved in the study, said in an email. “Wider adoption could have averted many cases and subsequent deaths.” Between July 2020 and July 2021, there were 6.6 million downloads of the app, the report says. However, in British Columbia, Alberta, Yukon, and Nunavut, users could not report a COVID-19 diagnosis on the app.

International

US: CVS requires pharmacists to get vaccinated

CVS Health is joining the group of US companies that require employees who have contact with customers to be vaccinated against COVID-19, [the Associated Press reports](#). Nurses and other employees who interact with patients, as well as all corporate staff, must be vaccinated by October 31, and pharmacists have until November 30, the company said on August 23. The company says its workforce of some 300,000 people includes more than 40,000 physicians, pharmacists, nurses and nurse practitioners. "From the start of the pandemic, our decision-making process has been driven by health, safety and science," says CVS health president and CEO Karen S. Lynch. "While the vast majority of our employees have chosen to be vaccinated, this decision is in direct response to the dramatic rise in cases among the unvaccinated."

US: Missouri pharmacy employees threatened with 'execution' for administering COVID-19 vaccines

A man known online as the "vaccine police" [harassed pharmacists at a Walmart](#) in Springfield, Missouri, saying the workers would be "executed" for administering the COVID-19 vaccine. Christopher Key, described as an entrepreneur, and his "Missouri crew" entered the Walmart Supercenter, making a beeline to the pharmacy. Key yelled that he was putting the store's workers "on notice." By the time Key and his group of about a half dozen reached the pharmacy, staff had locked the door, closed the window and were hiding in the room. The American Pharmacists Association (APhA) [condemned the actions](#), saying, "We deplore the intimidation and verbal assaults directed toward pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, and other pharmacy personnel at a pharmacy in Springfield, MO. APhA strongly believes that all members of our pharmacy workforce should be safe in their work environment. We cannot state this strongly enough: Anyone who threatens or intimidates pharmacy personnel must be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. There is no place for this kind of behavior in our communities, when so many are working tirelessly to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic."

US: Doctor wins restraining order against CVS after prescription ban

A Kentucky pain specialist has won a temporary restraining order against CVS Pharmacy after the retail chain forbade its pharmacies to fill his prescriptions, [according to Medscape](#). A district court judge ordered CVS to stop refusing prescriptions written by Dr. Kendall Hansen. An attorney representing Hansen says the order is groundbreaking and that to his knowledge, it's the first time a federal court has overturned a pharmacy's decision to block a prescriber. Michael DeAngelis, a spokesman for CVS, says the court's order illustrates the proverbial rock and hard place that pharmacies are placed between in the country's fight against the misuse of prescription opioids. "It is alleged in many lawsuits that pharmacies fill too many opioid prescriptions and should operate programs that use data to block prescriptions written by some doctors," he says. "And yet other lawsuits, including this one, argue that we should not operate programs that may block prescriptions. Such contradictions are grossly unfair to the pharmacy profession."

US: Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine gets full approval from the FDA

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has formally approved the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, [NPR reports](#). The widely anticipated decision replaces the emergency use authorization granted by the agency last December. It is the first COVID-19 vaccine to be subject to a full review by the US regulator and to get an approval that puts the vaccine on par with other marketed vaccines. The full approval could make it easier for employers, the military, and universities to mandate vaccination and may reassure some people who are hesitant about the vaccine. [A June poll from the Kaiser Family Foundation](#) found that 31% of unvaccinated people said they would be more likely to get a COVID-19 vaccine once one receives full approval from the FDA. As part of the approval process, the vaccine also got a brand name: Comirnaty. Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine remains under the FDA's review, but its approval is expected to follow soon.

US: J&J announces data to support boosting its single-shot COVID-19 vaccine

A second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine from Johnson & Johnson strongly increased antibody levels according to provisional data from 2 early-stage trials, [the New York Times reports](#). The results, issued in a [news release](#) by the company, showed that binding antibodies were 9 times higher after a second shot given 6 months after the first. J&J plans to submit the results to the FDA to evaluate its inclusion in the country's plan for booster shots.

Booster COVID-19 shots should be delayed: WHO director-general

World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on August 23 [in a report from Reuters](#) that COVID-19 booster shots should be delayed, as priority should be given to raising vaccination rates in countries where only 1% or 2% of the population has been inoculated. If vaccination rates are not raised globally, stronger variants of the coronavirus could develop, and vaccines intended as booster shots should be donated to countries where people have not received their first or second doses, he said during a visit to Budapest. "In addition, there is a debate about whether booster shots are effective at all," Ghebreyesus told a news conference with Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto. The WHO said last week current data does not indicate that COVID-19 booster shots are needed and that the most vulnerable people worldwide should be fully vaccinated before high-income countries deploy a top-up.

England: Pharmacies to get extra funding for providing heart checks

Community pharmacies in England could receive up to the equivalent of C\$3,110 in incentives to run a service that checks patients for hypertension beginning this October, according to [the Pharmaceutical Journal](#). The negotiations also secured a deal with Health Education England to provide independent prescribing training for community pharmacists. As part of the service, which was [piloted in pharmacies between November 2020 and July 2021](#), pharmacists offer Ambulatory Blood Pressure Monitoring (ABPM) interventions if initial blood pressure readings reveal that a patient has high blood pressure between 135/85mmHg and 180/120mmHg. Starting in September, pharmacies will also be able to provide new medicines service for additional therapeutic areas, including osteoporosis, gout, heart failure, glaucoma and

Parkinson's disease. And in January 2022, pharmacies will be able to provide a smoking cessation advanced service, following a pilot that began in November 2020.

Ireland: Importance of local pharmacy underscored by pandemic

Community pharmacies have increased in importance as a result of the pandemic, [the Irish Times reports](#). The [study](#), published by the Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU), found that with overall visits to GPs decreasing during the pandemic, pharmacies have grown in importance, and 39% of respondents now see their pharmacist as their most important health-care professional. This was up by more than a third on a previous survey. The majority of people (54%) said they visited the GP less often throughout the pandemic period, with many consulting with their pharmacist instead. Some 85% of people said they found pharmacies accessible compared with 51% for GPs and just 13% for hospitals. "The role of the community pharmacy has been expanding and increasing in importance for many years. This accelerated during the pandemic as pharmacies kept their doors open during each lockdown," IPU president Dermot Twomey says. "With people visiting GPs less, or GPs favouring virtual appointments, the accessibility of pharmacies is driving health care in our communities."

In-Depth

3 key factors in how Canada will fare during the 4th wave of COVID-19

It's tough—even impossible—to predict exactly how Canada will fare in the fourth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. And looking for clues from other countries only gets you so far. Some regions are being overwhelmed, yet again, by this virus, while others are avoiding catastrophe largely thanks to high vaccine uptake and other precautions. Widely different policy decisions and levels of restrictions also mean there's no one-size-fits-all outcome. So, what will determine Canada's experience in the months ahead? [Multiple experts tell CBC](#) that there are a few key factors in how the pandemic will play out as the delta variant continues spreading.

Worth Repeating

"You are not a horse. You are not a cow. Seriously, y'all. Stop it." — The US FDA [tweets a warning](#) against using the drug ivermectin for unapproved use as a medication to prevent or treat COVID-19.

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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