

Subject:

The Weekly: CPhA's Pharmacy News Update for December 1

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Pharmacists
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The Weekly

Bringing the world of pharmacy together

December 1, 2021**CPhA*****Childhood vaccination Resource Round-Up available***

With the COVID-19 vaccine now approved for children in Canada aged 5 to 11, there's a lot of information and resources to wade through. Whether you're administering shots at the pharmacy or answering questions from parents about vaccination, CPhA's latest [Resource Round-Up](#) brings together some helpful resources. The recording from last week's [COVID Conversations webinar](#)—Learning to play your CARDS: Improving the childhood vaccination experience—is now available and included in the resource line-up.

Pharmacists on the front line***Over 90% of opioid-related overdoses are accidental: pharmacist***

While Ottawa pharmacists are seeing fewer patients with opioid prescriptions, it doesn't mean opioid-related overdoses are happening any less, [says CityNews](#). In fact, according to Ottawa Shoppers Drug Mart Pharmacist Jordan Clark, about 94% of opioid-related overdoses are accidental, but persisting stigma is halting help for those who need it. "Like a lot of things during the pandemic, I think pharmacists are certainly on the front line of seeing what's happening with the opioid crisis," said Clark. "We've seen numbers that are pretty staggering in the provinces across the country when we're talking about opioid overdoses, and in some cases they're almost 80, 90 and sometimes even a 100% increase compared to this same time last year." Although

pharmacists are seeing fewer opioids prescribed to patients and more prescriptions given in smaller quantities, overdoses are still happening, but not for the reasons that are perpetrated by existing stigmas, Clark said. Doing their part, pharmacists are seeing more opportunities and understanding their role when dispensing opioids, including when someone could be at risk of overdosing.

NS pharmacy becomes community lifeline as floods close roads

Chelsea Hatcher, the owner of Highland PharmaChoice in New Haven, Nova Scotia, said her schedule has only become busier because of the flooding state of emergency in the province, [Saltwire Network reports](#). “I’m the only pharmacist [in Neils Harbour]. We’re very, very, very busy,” said Hatcher. “But we’re here, and we’re working on getting our drugs picked up in Sydney and we’re trying to do some deliveries to Ingonish via Chéticamp.” Hatcher lives in Ingonish and is currently staying with her parents who live in Neils Harbour. The ongoing road closure between the 2 communities also means residents of Neils Harbour don’t have direct access to a hospital and some other services. Hatcher said the pharmacy is normally “hectic on a good day,” so the storm has just exacerbated that, especially since they are short-staffed. “We have 2 staff that can’t make it in, obviously, because they live in Ingonish,” she said. “We’re just getting by and getting the emergencies out of the way first.”

Provincial

Time-delayed safes, panic alarms could help deter pharmacy robberies, working group says

Time-delayed safes to store narcotics as well as panic alarms for pharmacy staff could help counter a recent spike in pharmacy robberies in Alberta, a provincial working group has concluded, [according to CBC](#). The group, which includes the Alberta College of Pharmacy, the Alberta Pharmacists’ Association, police in Edmonton and Calgary, and the RCMP, was formed in April after police identified [an increase in the number of armed robberies at pharmacies](#). “We all saw merit in getting together, working together collaboratively because this is a community issue,” said college registrar Greg Eberhart. “It does require a joint response.” From September 2020 to August 2021, there were 89 pharmacy robberies in Calgary and 49 in Edmonton, according to College Communications Director Barry Strader. During the same period the previous year, there were 4 in Calgary and 14 in Edmonton. Since 2015, British Columbia pharmacies have been required to keep Schedule IA drugs in a safe with a timer that only allows it to open after a 5-minute wait. Schedule A1 drugs include opioids like fentanyl, oxycodone and hydromorphone.

Pharmacy tech launches petition to put zopiclone on narcotic monitoring system

An Ontario pharmacy technician concerned that some patients are stockpiling and potentially abusing a sedative-hypnotic drug has launched a petition urging Ontario’s Ministry of Health to add the prescription medication to the province’s narcotic monitoring system, [Canadian Healthcare Network reports](#). Michelle Manolal, who works at a Shoppers Drug Mart in Sudbury,

Ontario, set up a petition this week on Change.org as part of a campaign to get the drug zopiclone—which goes by the brand name Imovane—in the Ontario Narcotic Monitoring System. Earlier this year, Manolal was alerted by a pharmacist at another store that a patient was going to multiple pharmacies with prescriptions from zopiclone obtained from various walk-in clinics. The patient stopped coming in after he was questioned about these multiple, concurrent prescriptions, but his father subsequently started coming in with his own prescriptions for zopiclone. With zopiclone added to the narcotic monitoring system, pharmacists and prescribing doctors would be alerted when patients try to fill multiple prescriptions for the drug, said Manolal. This would help ensure the proper interventions and reduce the risk of harm for patients.

National

In 1 bill, Liberals push sick leave and crack down on health-care worker harassment

The federal Liberals have introduced a two-for-one piece of legislation that would provide sick leave to almost 600 000 workers, and bring the law down on anyone harassing doctors, nurses or patients, [the Canadian Press reports](#). The omnibus bill checked off 2 issues at the top of the government's legislative to-do list when MPs returned to Parliament Hill this week for the first time since the September 20 election. In one swoop, the government dealt with 2 issues the pandemic showed needed to be addressed, while also upping the political pressure on Conservatives in the House of Commons and their counterparts in provincial legislatures. The bill would create 2 new offences in the *Criminal Code*: one for anyone threatening a health-care worker, those who assist them, or anyone trying to access health services, and a second for anyone caught obstructing access to a health-care facility. It is already illegal to do either, but the government wants to up the maximum sentence to 10 years in prison from 5 and let judges use a health-care setting or victim as a factor in sentencing. In a [tweet](#), CPhA welcomes and “support[s] the federal government’s move . . . to introduce legislation to protect [health-care workers] from violence and intimidation.”

Ottawa wants NACI to review booster-shot directive

In light of a new COVID-19 variant, the government is asking its advisory agency on vaccines to re-examine the use of booster shots, [iPolitics reports](#). Health Minister Jean-Yves Duclos was speaking November 30 in his first update since G7 health ministers attended an urgent meeting to discuss the emergence of the highly mutated COVID-19 variant, Omicron. Because Canadians keep asking about boosters, the government wants the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) to come up with a revised directive, Duclos said. The board is independent and makes decisions separately from the government. So far, NACI has recommended boosters for Canadians 70 and older, front-line health-care workers and certain immunocompromised individuals 6 months after their last dose. Boosters are also recommended for anyone who got 2 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine or 1 dose of the Janssen vaccine, as well as adults in First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities.

Canada-wide contest recognizes the impact of pharmacy professionals on patient care

To recognize the impact of pharmacy professionals on patient care in Canada, Apotex announced it is now accepting nominations for the first-ever [APOthecary Heroes Contest](#). “We know that Canadians from coast-to-coast value the advice and support of their neighborhood pharmacist. We also know that pharmacy professionals have taken on an increasing volume of health care responsibility over the past few years in particular, and this contest is one way to recognize their contribution,” said Raymond Shelley, senior vice-president for the company’s commercial operations in Canada and the Caribbean. To participate, any Canadian can submit a nomination for their pharmacy professional of choice to showcase how their nominee goes above-and-beyond for patients or the pharmacy practice.

International

US: Pharmacist travels New Mexico in a minivan to bring vaccines to remote corners

Uri Bassan believes so deeply in getting people in New Mexico vaccinated against COVID-19 that he has converted his family van into a mobile vaccination clinic, [he told CBC's As It Happens](#). He and his team have been criss-crossing the state, holding clinics and helping reach people in rural and remote areas. He’s given people the vaccine in RV parks, arenas, elementary schools and parking lots. In one instance, he ordered pizza to a clinic in Santa Fe and made sure the pizza delivery person got a shot before leaving. [He told the New York Times](#) he estimates he and his team have given nearly 42 000 shots and racked up over 30 000 kilometres of travel.

UK: Pre-exposure prophylaxis should be available from community pharmacies

Ahead of World AIDS Day on December 1, the Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS) [called on the government](#) to widen access to pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) by making it available through community pharmacies across Great Britain. PrEP is available free through sexual health clinics and offers almost 100% protection from HIV when taken as recommended prior to sex or injecting drugs. The medication used for PrEP is a tablet which contains tenofovir and emtricitabine, drugs commonly used to treat HIV. Urging the government to engage with the profession to improve public health, RPS president and social pharmacy professor Claire Anderson said: “There is a clear opportunity to drive down rates of HIV infection by expanding provision of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) to community pharmacies and GP practices as part of the Government’s HIV Action Plan.”

In-Depth

Pharmacists see opportunities in TikTok to educate, advocate

As the app TikTok has exploded over the past 2 years, influencers have identified new ways to gain followers and expand their influence using the app’s short-video format. Among these influencers are a growing number of pharmacists and pharmacy students who are educating young viewers and advocating for the profession. [Pharmacy Times](#) profiles 3 pharmacists and looks at how they are using the app.

Here be homeopathic chameleons

In 2019, pharmacies in Quebec started to inform customers that homeopathy was not scientific. The McGill Office for Science and Technology [looks at where are we now](#), 2 years later.

Q & A with the experts: Long COVID-19

Long COVID-19 symptoms are believed to affect about 10% of those infected and can last from weeks to months. What symptoms persist in people with long COVID-19 and how can these be treated? Dr. Tejal Patel, a pharmacy professor at the University of Waterloo, [provides answers](#) to these and other questions.

Worth Repeating

“What we do know, however, is that prevention is key, and that tried-and-true public-health measures such as vaccination, good ventilation, masking, physical distancing and limiting crowd sizes, are still effective ways to slow the spread of the virus in whatever variant form it appears.”
—*Globe and Mail* health columnist [André Picard says](#) we need to be ready for Omicron, but let's not assume the worst

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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