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Canadian
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The Weekly

Bringing the world of pharmacy together

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CPhA

Webinar recording available: Motivational interviewing for improving adherence and outcomes

The rate of nonadherence to medication regimens has not changed in 40 years and is a multi-billion-dollar problem. In this educational webinar from November 23, Bruce A. Berger describes motivational interviewing (MI)—an evidence-based approach to improving treatment adherence by looking at patient health behaviours and outcomes—and discusses its effectiveness in community pharmacy practice. The content was developed by the speaker and is not accredited. The webinar recording can be viewed [here](#).

Resource Round-up: Childhood vaccination

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 updated Resource Round-up brings together some helpful resources. The resource page is available in [English](#) and [French](#). The recording from last week's [COVID Conversations webinar](#)—Learning to play your CARDS: Improving the childhood vaccination experience—is also included in the resource line-up.

Pharmacists on the front line

BC pharmacies restocked by air as flooding closes roads

Local pharmacies in BC's Okanagan Region are now getting resupplied through a combination of air and road freight as road-based supply chains remain challenged, [according to the Times-Chronicle](#). Pam Davis, pharmacist and co-owner of Pharmasave Osoyoos, said there was nearly a 10-day period where they did not get any deliveries. "But now we are getting twice-a-week deliveries from our primary supplier which is in Vancouver. So, it seems to be working well, everything is getting back on track." Chris Waller, pharmacist-owner of Lakeside Medicine Centre Pharmacy in Kelowna and board member of the BC Pharmacy Association said as soon as he realized that all of the roads were closed, he got on the line with the association. As inventories began to run low, shipments began arriving into Kelowna via air freight with trucks delivering to pharmacies throughout the Interior. Because of a shortage of air freight capacity between Vancouver and Kelowna, the province stepped in to ensure the supplies of medicine continued to flow. Pharmacists in South Okanagan have had a unique challenge managing the supply of refrigerated items like insulin, Waller added. "These are items that are not returnable because there's a cold chain element involved, so if they are outside of that cold chain for too long they shouldn't be used."

MB pharmacist weighs in on COVID-19 vaccines for kids

Rhonda Kitchen, pharmacist and owner of Hill's Drug Store in Portage La Prairie, Manitoba, [told Portage Online](#) that there's no reason to believe that the pediatric version of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine isn't safe for children. "Health Canada definitely waited before reviewing any information until they had what they needed, and they would not have approved it until they had the evidence showing in studies that it was going to be effective and not have major concerns," she said. "So certainly, as numbers of [vaccinated] kids increase, there may be those rare side effects, but at this point from what they're seeing in the studies, it is showing to be very, very effective and very safe." Kitchen explains that getting children vaccinated is essential in getting back to some form of normalcy. "I think it is important that, if we know that it's going to be effective, that we can have the kids immunized because a lot of the concerns with the social gatherings and keeping them in school has been preventing the spreads through cohorts and through classes, so to be able to have more interaction without the risk or fear of things spreading and taking out a whole class of kids which then affects the parents that need to be at home and all of the ramifications of that."

ON pharmacies already booking COVID-19 boosters for people 50 and older

As eligibility for third doses of the COVID-19 vaccine is dropping to anyone 50 and older next week, Ottawa Shoppers Drug Mart pharmacist and owner Jordan Clark [told CTV](#) he's been busy booking appointments. "It's been non-stop as we've gone just from regular eligibility, people getting first and second doses, into boosters, and now of course the 5 to 11 population as well," Clark said. "It's mostly phone calls at this point. People asking if they can come in early. We are holding off until the 13th for those appointments. But we have started to book." Clark said vaccine supply is no longer an issue and that he expects people 18 and older will become eligible for booster doses in early 2022. "If we look south of the border in the US, they've opened

it up now to anyone that wants to receive a booster can get one, and they are recommending it,” he said. “So, I think within a few months we’ll be there in Canada as well.”

Provincial

Pharmacists are now the largest single provider of COVID-19 vaccines in Alberta

Alberta pharmacists hit yet another milestone last week, having administered over 3.3 million COVID-19 vaccines, which makes them the single largest provider of COVID-19 vaccines in the province, the Alberta Pharmacists’ Association said [in a news release](#). This achievement builds on pharmacists’ previous responsibilities in public health, including their role vaccinating against influenza, pneumococcal disease and diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis. Last year, Alberta pharmacists administered more than 1 million flu shots, and this year have also quickly become the largest provider of flu shots, having administered 80% of all flu shots in the province. Pharmacists can also provide Albertans aged 65 and up with their pneumococcal vaccine and protect pregnant women against diphtheria-tetanus and pertussis.

Bladder infection assessments, treatments coming to MB pharmacies

The Manitoba government is expanding the scope of practice for pharmacists to include assessments and prescriptions for some individuals with bladder infections (cystitis) to help improve access to timely health care, Health and Seniors Care Minister Audrey Gordon announced on December 1. The new service, [as reported by the Brandon Sun](#), will be available in the coming months. Ashley Hart, past-president of Pharmacists Manitoba, explained prior to COVID-19 that urinary tract infections were one of the most common infections in primary care and in emergency rooms. The scope of pharmacy services has been changing in the face of COVID-19 and other medical needs, and this expansion is one step toward letting pharmacists provide more accessible health care to Manitobans.

Pharmacies in 3 provinces to offer rapid testing for hepatitis C, HIV and syphilis

By next fall, people will be able to walk into a pharmacy in 3 provinces—Alberta, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador—to get a rapid test for hepatitis C, HIV or syphilis, [VOCM reports](#). It’s part of [the APPROACH 2.0 study](#) through Memorial University’s School of Pharmacy. Dr. Debbie Kelly, an associate professor and the lead researcher on the project, said the objective is to improve diagnosis so that more people can seek treatment. Patients will get the results of their rapid test for HIV and hep C in minutes, but it will take a few days for syphilis test results. It’s estimated that 11% of people with HIV don’t know they have it, and the estimate is much higher—40%—for those with hepatitis C.

National

Cathy Puffer named 2021 Canadian Compounding Pharmacist of the Year

Cathy Puffer of Lindsay, Ontario, has been named the 2021 Canadian Compounding Pharmacist of the Year, [Kawartha411 reports](#). This award is presented annually to an independent

pharmacist who has demonstrated service excellence to patients, health-care providers and pharmacy colleagues. Compounding is the pharmacy method of preparing customized medications to meet each prescriber's and patient's unique needs. Puffer thanked her friends, colleagues and the Professional Compounding Centres of America team for the honour. I know many of the pharmacists who have won this in the past, and I don't feel that I am in their league," she said. Recognizing her staff for contributing to this achievement, she accepted the award with gratitude on behalf of the entire team at Remedy's Rx on Kent Street.

NACI recommends COVID booster shots for all adults

Canada's advisory body on immunization is now recommending that provinces offer all adults a booster dose of an authorized mRNA vaccine against COVID-19, 6 months or more after a second dose, [iPolitics reports](#). While this includes anyone age 18 to 49, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) "strongly" recommends that all Canadians over the age of 50 get one. The Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA vaccines were approved by Health Canada for boosters in November. Boosters are needed because vaccine effectiveness wanes over time, especially in older people, Chief Public Health Officer Theresa Tam said in a COVID-19 briefing on December 3. "No additional safety concerns were noted following mRNA vaccine booster doses," she added.

Merck to make its COVID-19 antiviral pill in Canada

Merck is partnering with a pharmaceutical company in Ontario to make its oral COVID-19 antiviral pill in Canada, [Global News reports](#). Merck, the maker of molnupiravir—which is still under Health Canada review—announced December 6 it reached an agreement with Thermo Fisher Scientific in Whitby, Ontario, to manufacture its treatment. Merck's announcement comes on the heels of the federal government's recent agreement with the company to purchase 500 000 courses of its molnupiravir treatment, with an option to add 500 000 more pending approval.

International

US: Pharmacies squeezed by vaccine demand, staff shortages

A rush of vaccine-seeking customers and staff shortages are squeezing pharmacies around the US, leading to frazzled workers and temporary pharmacy closures, [the Associated Press reports](#). Pharmacies are normally busy this time of year with flu shots and other vaccines, but pharmacists are now also doling out a growing number of COVID-19 shots and administering COVID-19 tests. The push for shots is expected to grow more intense as President Joe Biden urges vaccinated Americans to get booster shots to combat the emerging Omicron variant. The White House said that more than 2 in 3 COVID-19 vaccinations are happening at local pharmacies. Temporary closures due to staffing shortages have ebbed and flowed in pockets around the country throughout the pandemic, but they have grown more acute in recent months, according to Anne Burns, a vice president with the American Pharmacists Association. Pharmacies all need minimum staffing to operate safely, and they sometimes have to close temporarily if they fall below those levels. Burns said many pharmacies already had relatively

thin staffing levels heading into the pandemic, and a wave of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians left after the virus hit. “There is a lot of stress and burnout for individuals who have been going at this since March of 2020,” she said.

US: CVS Pharmacy’s Spoken Rx prescription labels now available at all locations

CVS Pharmacy is expanding its Spoken Rx audio prescription labels after a trial run last year. It will now be available in all its pharmacies, [according to the Verge](#). The feature, developed as part of a collaboration with the American Council of the Blind (ACB), is part of the CVS Pharmacy mobile app and can read prescription information—like dosage and directions—aloud in English or Spanish. Eric Bridges, executive director of ACB, called the feature a positive step. “Spoken Rx allows for a greater level of privacy, safety and independence for blind and visually impaired customers,” Bridges said in a statement.

US: HHS authorizes pharmacists to dispense COVID-19 therapeutics directly to patients

The US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) recently moved to allow licensed pharmacists to dispense Food and Drug Administration–authorized COVID-19 therapeutics directly to patients without a physician prescription, [the Georgia Pharmacists Association says](#). This step, taken by publishing an amendment to a declaration under the *Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness Act*, should help remove barriers to providing these important drugs in the 5-day window after symptoms appear, which is what studies from companies developing these drugs show is the optimal period for administration of their COVID-19 oral antivirals. HHS and the Biden administration—which already has secured millions of doses of the investigational antivirals to provide for free to patients once they are authorized—clearly see the pharmacy as a care hub for those who may not have access to primary care physicians and as an alternative to overwhelmed physician offices. “Given their skill set and training, as well as looming provider shortages, pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, and pharmacy interns will quickly expand access to COVID-19 therapeutics,” HHS stated in the notice.

UK: NHS to launch campaign to promote careers in pharmacy and other health-care professions experiencing shortages

The National Health Service (NHS) England is tendering for a recruitment campaign “to increase the attractiveness” of careers in the NHS, including in the pharmacy sector, to mitigate staff shortages, [the Pharmaceutical Journal reports](#). The notice published by the government says the campaign is being developed as “hospitals, mental health services and community providers are now reporting a shortage of nearly 84 000 [full-time equivalent] staff.” Workforces are comprised of a wide range of roles, including pharmacy technicians and pharmacists, it adds. In March, pharmacists were added to [the government’s list of occupations facing a national shortage](#), after evidence suggested there was “a decline in the number of pharmacy graduates and increasing demand for their services.” Following this, a report by the Community Pharmacy Workforce Development Group, published in June, recommended that policymakers and professional bodies “undertake a program of collaborative work to ensure community pharmacy is seen as an attractive career choice for future pharmacists.”

In-Depth

Alberta pharmacists taking on more responsibility during pandemic

We've been hearing a lot about health-care heroes during this pandemic, but the list often doesn't include pharmacists, who have played a bigger role than ever over the past 20 months. Su-Ling Goh of Global News reports [on how pharmacists have taken on more during the pandemic](#).

The pharmacist of the future

If more pharmacists were to operate to the full potential of their professional education and skill sets, they could play an important role in elevating the well-being of patients. [In Deloitte's Future of Health vision](#), the focus will be on prevention over treatment, and care will happen in the home or community. As accessible and trusted health-care personnel, pharmacists can help people stay healthy, better manage their chronic conditions, and age in place.

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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