



Canadian
Pharmacists
Association
Association des
pharmaciens
du Canada

The Weekly

Bringing the world of pharmacy together

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CPhA

Pharmacy distribution of COVID-19 rapid test kits for workplaces

The Canadian Pharmacists Association (CPhA) has been working with Health Canada and its partners in the pharmacy community to make rapid test kits available in pharmacies for workplace testing by small and medium-sized enterprises. Increasing access to these tests is an important step in Canada's COVID-19 screening and recovery strategy, and pharmacists are ideally positioned to aid with distribution. All interested pharmacies in Ontario, Manitoba and Alberta can now register to distribute tests to employers in their communities through the federal [pharmacy rapid-test distribution portal](#). CPhA has created a [resource page \(en français\)](#) with more information and additional training resources.

Canadians' perception of pharmacists as immunizers: Survey results from Abacus Data

A new [Abacus Data survey on COVID-19 vaccines](#) led by CPhA highlights the impact the pandemic has had on the way patients view their pharmacists when it comes to immunization. For instance, most Canadians see a continued central role for pharmacy in the COVID-19 vaccine rollout, including in the administration of booster shots, as 7 in 10 Canadians would get their booster shots at a community pharmacy. Canadians' confidence in the role pharmacists play administering vaccines has also risen since November 2020 polling, suggesting pharmacy participation in the COVID-19 vaccine rollout is strengthening Canadians' view of pharmacists as immunizers. Finally, the polling suggests there is a larger role for pharmacy in routine vaccinations beyond COVID-19, given that 87% of Canadians would feel comfortable receiving

routine vaccinations at a pharmacy.

Resource Round-up: Women's health

CPhA's new Resource Round-up series gathers available resources and practice tools on important health topics to help pharmacists optimize patient care in their communities. The first edition on women's health brings together tools to help pharmacists treat health issues such as uncomplicated UTIs and provide medical abortion services at the pharmacy. The resource page is available in [English](#) and [French](#).

Pharmacy on the front line

COVID-19 vaccine house calls coming from pharmacists in Waterloo region

Some pharmacists in Waterloo region are preparing to go into people's homes to administer the COVID-19 vaccine if residents are unable to get out to a clinic, [reports CBC](#). Tamara Daharu, the pharmacist at Emerald Pharmacy Remedy Rx in Cambridge, ON, says there's been fewer walk-ins for the vaccine in recent weeks, so the pharmacy has signed up to offer at-home visits. Daharu says this is an opportunity to demonstrate that pharmacists can go out into the community to help people. Kelly Grindrod, a pharmacist and associate professor in the school of pharmacy at the University of Waterloo, says [there are concerns some Moderna doses at pharmacies in Waterloo region could expire](#) in the next month as fewer people are getting the COVID-19 vaccine. "[Pharmacists] were doing dozens to well over 100 doses a day in the early part of July. So they have [the vaccine] sitting in the fridge and then the number just plummeted. Interest just plummeted with very little notice," Grindrod says.

Cape Breton pharmacy punching above its weight in vaccine rollout

A Cape Breton pharmacy located in a tiny village home to about 800 people has become a vaccination hub for people across the province, [reports CBC](#). Stone's Pharmasave in NS, has administered 5,000 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine, with at least 3,200 of those being first doses. Graham MacKenzie, the store owner and pharmacist, says what's driving the pharmacy's high numbers are people's eagerness to get vaccinated and their willingness to travel. "It was almost like a lottery," MacKenzie says. "They would drive from Halifax. They would land at the store, get their shot, turn around and go back. We had people from Antigonish, Arichat—it was everywhere." To accommodate an average of 100 people per day, the small pharmacy got creative: An upstairs hardware store became its vaccination clinic, with people getting their needles next to a row of tub and shower displays. Pharmacy staff also made trips to patient homes and administered a few vaccines to people inside their cars. Across the province, pharmacies have now administered 583,615 doses of vaccine, while community clinics have administered 468,229 doses, according to recent numbers from the Health Department.

Provincial

SK methadone switch has advocates concerned

Saskatchewan plans to switch patients on an opioid substitution therapy to different formulations, sparking concern it will push patients to use an increasingly deadly illicit drug supply, [according to the Star Phoenix](#). Saskatchewan's Ministry of Health has approved the listing of Methadose and Metadol-D on the provincial formulary, meaning those products will eventually replace compounded methadone that pharmacists mix and dispense today. Dawn Martin, CEO of the Pharmacy Association of Saskatchewan, says the change would allow some pharmacists to continue offering methadone, given more stringent regulations on dispensing compounded medications recently introduced by the Saskatchewan College of Pharmacy Professionals. Martin says she has also advocated to postpone the transition until after the COVID-19 pandemic, knowing it could be challenging for patients and pharmacists. She says the association is also proposing a new "care model" to make pharmacists more available to those patients, partially in anticipation of the switch. "We want to make sure it's done in a way where patients understand what's happening and it works for them," Martin says, adding she anticipates the change will not happen until next spring. Martin also suggests some patients could remain on the old methadone formulation if needed. The ministry says this would require a special exception drug status application "if the patient is unable to tolerate the commercially available methadone products."

OPA urges province to expand publicly funded PCR travel testing

As travel opens up, the association representing Ontario's pharmacists is lobbying the province to drastically expand the number of pharmacies permitted to offer publicly funded PCR tests—the gold standard for assessing if someone has COVID-19, [reports CBC](#). The Ontario Pharmacists Association (OPA) is also asking the province to cover the cost for tests needed for "essential travel" like funerals or family crises. "With the border restrictions planning to ease over the next several weeks, I think you're going to definitely see a spike in [demand]," says Justin Bates, the association's CEO. "So having more availability of more locations will only help." While there are 211 Ontario pharmacies authorized to provide publicly funded PCR tests so that people can visit loved ones in long-term care homes, Bates says if essential travel also ends up being covered, there are more than 2,000 pharmacies willing to offer them.

Quebec pharmacies administer 1 million COVID-19 vaccines

More than a million COVID-19 vaccines have been administered to date in 1,475 pharmacies across Quebec, [according to the l'Association québécoise des pharmacies propriétaires \(AQPP\)](#). Had it not been for logistics and supply constraints, this number could have been even higher, the association says, considering that the 1,475 community pharmacies in Quebec that provide vaccines have a capacity of 125,000 doses per week. As vaccines began to be delivered to pharmacies, patients had access to more appointments, often a few steps from their home, and with a health-care professional who knows them well. A recent survey by Abacus Data for CPhA indicates that 84% of Quebec patients trust pharmacists for the administration of vaccines. The massive participation of pharmacists in the COVID-19 vaccination campaign once again confirms their central role in the Quebec health system, says AQPP president, Benoit Morin.

National

Canada set to receive 7.1 million COVID-19 vaccine doses this week

The federal government is expecting to receive about 7.1 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines this week, as it adjusts its distribution strategy amid waning vaccination rates and substantial supply, [reports the Canadian Press](#). The new deliveries will include about 3.1 million doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine and 4 million doses of Moderna. Brig.-Gen. Krista Brodie, who is overseeing the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines across the country, says Canada is moving to a “more nuanced” approach, as the supply of doses is on the verge of outstripping demand. More than 2 million doses of vaccine are already being held back because provinces have said they can’t use them yet, Brodie says. The move marks a shift away from the early strategy of sending doses around the country as quickly as possible after they arrive.

Plan to import medicines by US not safe nor practical: ASOP Canada

The Alliance for Safe Online Pharmacies (ASOP) Canada fears that US importation of Health Canada–approved medication will potentially drive Canadian and American patients to look for medicine through unconventional sources, such as unlicensed, illegal internet pharmacies that often distribute counterfeit, substandard or unapproved drugs. [In a statement](#), the group says any plan to import medicines from Canada is not safe nor practical. “Our drug supply is meant for Canadians, not a country with a population 10 times our size. Canada already faces shortages for a range of life-saving medicines.” The group urges the Biden administration to pursue other mechanisms to help Americans access medicines in a manner that does not place Canada’s drug supply at risk. “We will continue to urge Canada’s government to take swift and urgent action to protect Canada’s drug supply in response to US state plans to import medicines from Canada.”

International

US: As more Americans buy meds on the internet, most prioritize cost and convenience over safety

According to a [new national survey](#) the Alliance for Safe Online Pharmacies (ASOP) Global Foundation commissioned from Abacus Data, nearly half of American consumers are willing to risk threats to their health by purchasing medications from unregulated online sources for the sake of more convenience and lower prices. Further, US drug importation policies give consumers a false sense of security, leading many to misbelieve that all Canadian medicines sold online are safe and legitimate. Alarming, more than one-third of consumers polled said they would knowingly ignore explicit government prohibitions from buying medicines from Canadian online pharmacies because of their misperceptions that they can safely access cheaper medications from sources abroad.

Ireland: Irish pharmacies pass 100,000 COVID-19 vaccination milestone

Pharmacies have passed the 100,000 vaccine milestone as the COVID-19 vaccination program

ramps up in Ireland, [reports the Irish Mirror](#). The Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU) confirmed on July 19 that it had passed the milestone and is delivering up to 10,000 vaccines per day. “Since the approval of the first COVID-19 vaccines, we have called for community pharmacies to be centrally involved in the rollout. The immediate success of the pharmacy program has demonstrated the value of our involvement,” says IPU secretary general, Darragh O’Loughlin. “As of July 19, pharmacies had administered 100,335 vaccines nationwide and since the service was opened to younger people that number has been growing consistently by 5,000 to 10,000 vaccines per day.” Over 86,000 of the vaccines administered in pharmacies have gone to the younger age cohort. Most of them would still be waiting for a vaccine if a large vaccination centre was their only option, O’Loughlin says.

UK: RPS calls for reduction in inequalities in women’s health

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS) [is calling for measures](#) to tackle the health inequalities experienced by women across Great Britain. Many women’s health issues are associated with stigma, which may result in women feeling uncomfortable to openly discuss them and lead to tolerance of abnormal symptoms, reducing quality of life and possibly resulting in late detection of cancer. Stigma also exists around pregnancy and childbirth for lesbians and people in non-traditional family units. Claire Anderson, RPS president, says: “Pharmacists can help reduce stigma and improve women’s awareness of what is normal and what is not, covering issues like endometriosis, excessive menstrual bleeding, menopause, and incontinence. Improved guidance on medication in pregnancy and breastfeeding is needed to ensure pharmacists can provide consistent, evidence-based, reliable information and advice to women across Great Britain. We believe women’s health should be covered in undergraduate training for pharmacists, and more research data is needed on how medicines work specifically in women.”

Worth repeating

“Alberta’s pharmacists are among the best in Canada and internationally recognized as leaders in pharmacy. Alberta’s pharmacists were the first in Canada to be entrusted with handling and administering the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines. They were also the first to reach one million vaccinations given at pharmacies. From big cities to small towns, they have driven our vaccine rollout forward.” – Alberta Minister of Health, Tyler Shandro, [in an op-ed](#) on how pharmacists have risen to the vaccination challenge.

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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