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Canadian
Pharmacists
Association
Association des
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du Canada

The Weekly

Bringing the world of pharmacy together

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CPhA

CPhA releases tools and resources to support pharmacists this flu season

Pharmacists play a vital role in public health, administering nearly half of all flu shots delivered across Canada each year. According to a [national survey](#) commissioned by CPhA ahead of this flu season, the increased demand for flu shots experienced last year is expected to continue, and pharmacies will still be the most likely place for immunization. To help pharmacists safely and effectively provide influenza immunizations to patients, our [influenza webpage](#) is being updated regularly with tools and resources, including suggested operational best practices for community pharmacy, a fact sheet to help prepare patients for their visit to the pharmacy, and answers to common questions about the flu shot. The webpage and resources are also [available in French](#).

Pharmacists on the front line

Ottawa pharmacies roll out flu shot ahead of expected busy season

The peak of flu season is only weeks away and pharmacies are working hard to get as many shots in arms as possible. Heidi Gabriel, pharmacist and owner of Gabriel Drugs, [told CTV](#) she has administered 500 flu shots in the past 3 weeks. "We are seeing an influx of people asking for the flu shot and a lot of people are eager to get it," said Gabriel. The CEO of the Ontario Pharmacists Association, Justin Bates, said that the flu vaccine rollout has been a success in

Ontario so far: “We’ve administered approximately 500,000 through pharmacy . . . Which is a good pace if you look at last year we did just under 2 million for the entire season.” To help during the pandemic, pharmacy technicians were approved to administer COVID-19 vaccines alongside pharmacists, but they still have not been approved to administer the flu shot, which Gabriel says is slowing things down.

People in NS bitten by a tick can now go to pharmacy for Lyme disease assessment

Nova Scotians who get bitten by a tick can now go to their pharmacy to be assessed for Lyme disease, a serious bacterial infection caused by bites from an infected blacklegged tick, [reports Global News](#). The cost of the assessment will be covered by the government. Previously, those with tick bites had to go to a doctor or nurse practitioner to get a provincially covered assessment. “We are very happy with the government’s decision to fund another important pharmacy service for something that can be quite urgent,” said Diane Harpell, chair of the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia. The prevalence of Lyme disease across the country has been rising in the last decade. In 2019, there were 830 confirmed and probable cases of Lyme disease in Nova Scotia. In 2009, that number was just 17.

Provincial

Class-action lawsuit filed against BC pharmacy over reused COVID syringes

A proposed class-action lawsuit has been filed against a pharmacy in New Westminster, BC, for allegedly reusing syringes to administer COVID-19 vaccinations for patients, [reports the Vancouver Sun](#). In an email, the College of Pharmacists of BC said that the matter remains under investigation and referred to a complaint outcome for Bhanu Prasad Seelaboyina, the pharmacist who was employed as the pharmacy’s manager. The outcome says that an inquiry committee had reached an agreement with the pharmacist to impose limits and conditions on his practice pending an investigation into his conduct. Until the investigation is complete, Seelaboyina has agreed not to act in the role of pharmacy manager and must not administer drugs or substances by injection.

Police warn of prescription scammers

West Vancouver police say they’ve seen a swath of reports of a new type of scam that targets people who take prescription medicine, [according to Vancouver Is Awesome](#). The fraud involves someone cold-calling residents, purporting to be from a local pharmacy, and claiming their script has been filled and they just need a credit card number to process it. “We had, over the course of last week, about 30 calls about the exact same scam. That’s only those that have chosen to call police about it,” said a West Vancouver police spokesperson. Taking the scam a step further, the caller would sometimes offer home delivery of the drugs, which requires the victim to hand over their home address, another piece of personal info that can be used in identity theft.

People paid others to fraudulently get vaccinated in their name, SK pharmacy college says

Vaccine fraud has occurred in Saskatchewan, with an unspecified number of people paying others to take their place during the vaccination process, says the professional body regulating pharmacists in the province and [reported by CBC](#). “The Saskatchewan College of Pharmacy Professionals (SCPP) has confirmed there is vaccine fraud occurring within Saskatchewan,” states [an SCPP note to registered pharmacists](#) that was obtained by CBC. College registrar Jeana Wendel said the organization does not have statistics, but has “confirmed through our health system partners that various forms of vaccine fraud have occurred within the province.” Given “the high stakes involved around COVID-19 vaccinations,” pharmacists have tightened their ID verification procedures, Wendel said. The college is requiring pharmacists to ensure COVID-19 immunization patients aged 16 and over provide government-issued photo ID to prove their identity.

Indigenous student mentorship program launches for UM Rady Faculty learners

A mentorship program for Indigenous students at the Rady Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Manitoba will provide learners with a role model to whom they can ask questions and turn to for advice, [says UM Today News](#). “The goal of the program is to build a support network amongst Indigenous students,” said Kimberly Hart, senior lead, Indigenous Health Student Affairs, Ongomiizwin – Education, Rady Faculty of Health Sciences. “A student’s story can actually have a major impact on another student, or someone who is aspiring to go into health care. It’s the students that really make a connection and their stories resonate.” When Kelsey Tanner, a recent College of Pharmacy graduate, was studying pharmacy, she said she would’ve liked to have had a mentor who she could have received guidance from. After successfully navigating the program, she now wants to help others feel less alone on their academic journey as a mentor. Tanner said that if students have any uncertainties about becoming a mentee, they should reach out. “There’s nothing to lose and everything to gain,” she said.

Researchers ask for feedback on COVID-19 vaccine information sheet for kids

Researchers at the University of Waterloo’s School of Pharmacy are asking for feedback from parents and the community as they prepare to release an information sheet on the COVID-19 vaccine and children. People can fill out an [online survey](#) that will help researchers better answer questions parents or guardians may have about the vaccine, according to Dr. Kelly Grindrod, an associate professor at the School of Pharmacy. “We’ve been trying to anticipate the kinds of questions parents need to have answered to feel comfortable making a decision about the vaccination,” [Grindrod told CBC](#). “A big part of it was trying to provide some information on what we know about the virus in kids . . . Separately, when you talk with parents about the vaccine, especially [about] the COVID vaccine, safety is the number one concern.”

National

Canada’s top doctors reject COVID booster shots for all (for now)

Just days after Canada’s committee of vaccination advisers recommended that booster shots be

given to more groups at high risk of severe complications from COVID-19, the country's chief medical officers are saying the general population doesn't need them yet, reports [iPolitics](#). On October 29, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) [published updated advice](#) on administering third doses, commonly called booster shots. On November 1, the Council of Chief Medical Officers of Health (CCMOH) said that they'd make their own recommendations to the governments they report to with NACI's advice and regional epidemiological circumstances in mind, but they don't believe it's necessary to offer everyone a booster. "Given there is currently no evidence of widespread waning of protection against severe disease in the general population who have been vaccinated against COVID-19 in Canada, boosters for this group are not required at this time," the CCMOH said in a statement. "But we will continue to monitor vaccine effectiveness and other data to inform the need in the future."

Needle phobias preventing some people from getting COVID-19 vaccines. These interventions could help

About 4.5% of adults in Canada have a severe phobia of needles, according to the [Canadian Psychological Association](#). It's characterized by a persistent fear of needles and intense anxiety or distress around having blood work done or receiving injections. Anna Taddio investigates needle phobias, particularly in children, at the University of Toronto's Leslie Dan Faculty of Pharmacy. She [told CBC](#) that while most nurses receive training in how to make people feel more relaxed around getting needles, there are a myriad easy and often free ways to put people with intense needle phobia at ease. One strategy is called the CARD system, where patients are shown cards labelled with letters and told to choose their preferred intervention: "c" for comfort, "a" for asking questions, "r" for relax and "d" for distract. If someone chooses distraction, they might be given a basket of fidgeting toys to divert their attention. "Using the CARD system means staff can customize patients' experiences [to] have better outcomes," says Taddio.

International

US: CDC approves Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine for kids aged 5 to 11

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) approved the use of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine for children aged five to 11 on November 2, allowing physicians across the United States to begin administering the shot to school-aged children, [reports Global News](#). The approval comes after an advisory committee to the CDC recommended that Pfizer's shots be given to this age group, stating that the benefits of vaccination outweigh the risks of the vaccine. Much of their discussion stemmed from rare cases of heart inflammation that have been linked to the vaccine, particularly in young men.

US: Drug companies win in California opioid crisis lawsuit

A California judge has ruled for top drug manufacturers, as local governments seek billions of dollars to cover their costs from the nation's opioid epidemic, [says the Associated Press](#). An Orange County Superior Court judge issued a tentative ruling on November 1 that said the governments hadn't proven the pharmaceutical companies used deceptive marketing to increase

unnecessary opioid prescriptions and create a public nuisance. The plaintiffs said they were disappointed by the ruling but planned to appeal to “ensure no opioid manufacturer can engage in reckless corporate practices that compromise public health in the state for their own profit.” The lawsuit names Johnson & Johnson, along with AbbVie Inc.’s Allergan subsidiary, Endo International, Teva Pharmaceutical Industries and others. The companies had argued in court filings that “opioid medications are an appropriate treatment for many chronic-pain patients” and that much of their marketing mimicked approved warnings by the US Food and Drug Administration.

UK: RPS joins forces with FIP in climate fight

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS) has signed a letter with the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) demonstrating a commitment to tackling climate change and to voice support for COP26. [The letter](#), which has been sent to heads of state and national delegations, shows a shared commitment and outlines initiatives that can be delivered as part of the contribution to the climate change crisis and specifically COP26. As medication experts, pharmacists can protect the environment by continuing to support people to stay well and, through reducing medicines waste, tackling air and water pollution and implementing green pharmacy practices. RPS President Claire Anderson said, “This is a pivotal moment in the fight against climate change and as a society we stand with FIP to champion pharmacy’s role in creating sustainable healthcare.”

Ireland: Pharmacists criticize exclusion from COVID booster campaign

The Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU) has [strongly criticized](#) the decision to exclude community pharmacies from the campaign to provide COVID-19 booster shots, stating that failure to include pharmacies is illogical and will only serve to slow down the rollout of boosters. Pharmacies began offering COVID-19 vaccines in June and have administered almost 320,000 nationwide. Speaking about the importance of the role of pharmacists, Kathy Maher, chair of the IPU’s Pharmacy Contractors Committee, said, “Pharmacies have demonstrated their immense capacity to deliver COVID-19 vaccinations nationwide. The inclusion of pharmacies in the vaccination campaign during the summer delivered an immediate impact with many people who would not otherwise have got a vaccine getting it through their local pharmacy, particularly those who could not access a vaccination centre.”

In-Depth

The ivermectin train cannot stop

As the evidence for ivermectin helping with COVID-19 crumbles, prominent promoters double down. The McGill Office for Science and Society [explains why](#).

Worth Repeating

“There was a thought that maybe there would be a vaccine fatigue this year, but people are

taking this vaccine quite seriously.” —Graham Mackenzie, owner of Stone’s Pharmasave in Baddeck, NS, on the [strong demand for the flu shot](#) this year.

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.

Canadian Pharmacists Association
1785 Alta Vista Drive, Ottawa, ON K1G 3Y6
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