



Canadian
Pharmacists
Association
Association des
pharmaciens
du Canada

The Weekly

Bringing the world of pharmacy together

October 6, 2021

CPhA

Upcoming webinar: The pharmacist's role in managing chronic kidney disease

Pharmacists play a vital role in assessing risk of chronic kidney disease in their patients, and earlier intervention can significantly impact patient outcomes. Join speaker Michael Boivin on October 13 from 1:00–2:30 pm ET for a discussion about how new practice and guidance changes following outcomes from major cardio-renal studies can result in earlier identification of at-risk patients and enhanced health outcomes. *This webinar is being hosted by CPhA on behalf of AstraZeneca. The content has been developed by the speaker and is not accredited.* [Register now.](#)

CPhA's mental health resources for pharmacists and pharmacy patients

As health-care workers on the front line, pharmacists are often the first point of contact for those struggling with their mental health, but the pandemic has highlighted the importance of pharmacists looking after their own health and wellness. For [Mental Illness Awareness Week](#) (October 3-9) and [World Mental Health Day](#) (October 10), check out the second edition of CPhA's Resource Round-up series, which brings together tools related to mental health and wellness for both pharmacy patients and pharmacists. The resource page is available in [English](#) and [French](#).

Pharmacists on the front line

Documentary takes a deep dive into the life of NL pharmacist

A new Absolutely Canadian film, [Set in Motion](#), traces the story of 3 women in the mobile workforce, including pharmacist Kara O'Keefe, who works on Bell Island but lives in St. John's, [CBC reports](#). O'Keefe's daily work routine is often impacted by the vagaries of the weather and ferry breakdowns. "When I get up on Monday morning, the first thing that is going through my mind is that I have to deal with the ferry for the next 5 days," she says. "The work commute can complicate my job sometimes. If I don't get over there and if someone's chemotherapy is supposed to come with me, that means, unfortunately, the treatment will be delayed." O'Keefe, who has been working on Bell Island since 2016, is the first woman in charge of the pharmacy in more than 100 years. "I really like working in a small community. You wear many hats. You get to have an impact on your patients' lives."

Provincial

Take flu seriously, pharmacist warns

For nearly 2 years, health-care professionals have been urging people to take precautions against COVID-19. But there's another respiratory illness people should also be mindful of: influenza. Port Coquitlam, BC, pharmacist Ajit Johal, who is also clinical director of Immunize.co, a non-profit that aims to improve education and access to vaccination in the province, [tells CTV](#) he is concerned people will not take the flu seriously this year. "I think the complacency sets in after last year's influenza season, where we saw record low levels of transmission. So we don't want people to think that that virus has gone away," Johal said. "We have to be very mindful that influenza, like many other diseases, is very unpredictable, so being low one season and high the next."

SK urges people to get flu shot as COVID-19 crushes hospitals

Saskatchewan pharmacists and public health experts are urging people to get a flu shot this year to keep pressure off the province's strained acute care system, [the Saskatoon StarPhoenix reports](#). The annual flu shot campaign comes as the province grapples with the Delta variant of COVID-19 that has sent a record number of people to intensive care units. Myla Bulych, director of professional affairs at the Pharmacy Association of Saskatchewan (PAS), said more than 380 pharmacies have already signed up to offer the shot. She expects them all to stay busy, especially in the early weeks of the campaign. Bulych, who is also a pharmacist in Regina, said offering the shots has "exponentially" increased pharmacists' workloads and cautioned that people may have to wait when seeking a flu shot. "People I think just need to be patient with booking their shots, because we know the demand is very, very high for the . . . first 2 to 3 weeks."

NB to cover pharmacy costs for some prescription renewals and UTI assessments and prescriptions

The New Brunswick provincial government is making it easier for people to access some

services that would normally require a visit to a walk-in clinic or emergency room, [according to a news release](#). At the start of the month, the government began to cover the costs for pharmacists to renew prescriptions for people who do not have a primary care provider or who are in an urgent situation. In addition, the government will cover the costs for pharmacists to assess and prescribe medication for uncomplicated urinary tract infection (UTI) for people between the ages of 16 and 64 who have previously been diagnosed with an uncomplicated UTI. Pharmacists have been authorized to provide these services since 2014, but patients had to pay a fee as the services were not covered under the public health system. “By supporting a wider range of publicly covered pharmacist services, the province is taking a tangible and positive step to improve access to primary health care,” said Andrew Drover, president of the New Brunswick Pharmacists’ Association.

National

Risk of death more than 130% higher with Delta variant than original COVID virus, research suggests

[According to CBC](#), a new study using Canadian data suggests the Delta variant of the COVID-19 virus causes more serious disease and is associated with an increased risk of death compared to previous strains—dangers that are drastically reduced with vaccination. The study, conducted by researchers at the University of Toronto and published in [the Canadian Medical Association Journal](#), analyzed more than 212 000 cases of COVID-19 reported in Ontario between February 7 and June 27, 2021. It found that those infected with the Alpha variant, which drove the province’s third wave in the early spring, or the Beta or Gamma variants were 52% more likely to be hospitalized, 89% more likely to need intensive care, and 51% more likely to die of the infection than those who caught the early 2020 version of the virus. Among Delta cases, researchers found a 108% increased risk for hospitalization, 235% increased risk for ICU admission and 133% increased risk for death compared to the original virus strain.

Pfizer submits preliminary data to Health Canada for kids’ COVID-19 vaccine

Pfizer and its partner BioNTech have submitted preliminary data from their trial for a COVID-19 shot for kids to Health Canada earlier than expected, [CBC reports](#). A formal filing of the submission for authorization of a vaccine for children is expected in mid-October, according to an email from Health Canada. Authorization of a vaccine for children between the ages of 5 and 11 years old would be a major step. There are currently no COVID-19 vaccines authorized for children under 12 years old in Canada. Last week, Pfizer submitted data on its study for a vaccine for children to the US Food and Drug Administration, with a formal request for emergency use authorization in the US also expected in the coming weeks.

Health Canada working to review Merck’s experimental COVID-19 pill treatment

Health Canada says it’s working with international counterparts to review an experimental pill from drugmaker Merck, which the company reports can [reduce hospitalizations and deaths by half](#) in patients sick with COVID-19. During a news briefing on October 1, the Public Health

Agency of Canada (PHAC) said Merck first submitted an approval request on August 13, 2021, for molnupiravir—a twice-daily oral antiviral agent taken within 5 days after the onset of symptoms—as a potential treatment for COVID-19. According to PHAC, the submission was accepted under a [Ministry of Health interim order](#), which allows for the review of “early safety, quality and efficacy data” while later-stage clinical trials take place. Canada currently has [4 approved treatments for COVID-19](#), including Canadian-made COVID-19 monoclonal antibody bamlanivimab and antiviral medication remdesivir. If cleared, molnupiravir would be the first oral pill shown to treat COVID-19.

78% of Canadians support COVID-19 vaccine passport for public places: poll

Canadians overwhelmingly support the idea of requiring vaccine passports to gain admittance to public places such as restaurants, bars and gyms, [the Canadian Press reports](#). The Leger poll found 78% of respondents strongly support (56%) or somewhat support (22%) requiring proof of vaccination against COVID-19 to visit non-essential public places where numerous people typically congregate, including concert halls and festivals. Just 13% said they strongly oppose a proof-of-vaccination requirement, variations of which are being introduced by provincial governments across the country. Another 9% said they're somewhat opposed. Support ranged from a low of 70% in the Atlantic provinces to a high of 86% in British Columbia. In Alberta, 81% of respondents also supported the move, although the province has been the most reluctant to adopt a vaccine passport system.

International

US: Pharmacy chains failed to prevent opioid misuse, jury hears

Pharmacy operators including CVS and Walmart fuelled the US opioid epidemic by failing to stop massive quantities of addictive painkillers from reaching the black market, a lawyer for 2 Ohio counties said at the start of a trial on October 4. [According to a Reuters report](#), Mark Lanier told a federal jury in the first trial that the pharmacy chains have faced nationwide litigation during the epidemic that they bore responsibility for drug abuse in the Ohio counties of Lake and Trumbull. He said the 4 pharmacy operators now on trial were “the last line of defense” against people obtaining pills to illicitly sell on the streets. Kaspar Stoffelmayr, a lawyer for Walgreens, countered that others were to blame for the surge in pain pills, including doctors who prescribe them and regulators who see pain as needing vital treatment. “Pharmacists don’t create demands,” he said. “They don’t tell doctors what prescriptions to write.” Most instances of opioids being diverted for illicit uses do not involve pharmacies, Stoffelmayr said, citing a study that shows most prescribed pain pills go unused and sit in medicine cabinets.

UK: RPS welcomes contraceptive pilot initiative

Community pharmacies in England [will be able to offer](#) contraceptive pill checks as part of a pilot initiative from the National Health Service (NHS) England. The pilot will give patients better access to contraception and sexual health services, and will help free up general practice and the NHS. “We are pleased that the pilot will improve access to contraception and sexual health

services and, as medicines experts, pharmacists are well placed to deliver this service and support the public with health-care advice,” Thorrun Govind, chair of the RPS England Pharmacy Board, says. “People seeking this support for contraception can be assured that pharmacists are trained to deliver contraceptive services, as seen recently with the move to offer a progestogen-only pill over the counter at pharmacies.”

Ireland: Pharmacists see 15% rise in prescriptions for antidepressants, antianxiety drugs

Irish pharmacists are dispensing an increasing number of antidepressants, mood stabilizers and tranquilizers, with close to 5 million such prescriptions dispensed in the first 8 months of this year, [according to the Irish Examiner](#). Dermot Twomey, president of the Irish Pharmacy Union, said the pandemic has been a challenging experience for all who have lived through it, bringing pressure to both personal and professional lives. “Lockdowns created feelings of loneliness and isolation, many will have suffered from financial worries, while fears and anxieties over the virus itself were commonplace. Even today, as we await the final easing of restrictions, many people will be cautious about reintegrating and returning to a more normal life.” Twomey said it is “entirely understandable” that for some, the pressures associated with the numerous lockdowns and the threat posed by COVID-19 have led to more “serious challenges” to their mental well-being. Twomey added that pharmacists across the country have been helping patients deal with mental health challenges since early last year.

In-Depth

Can the flu vaccine also help with COVID-19?

The flu vaccine was made to protect us from influenza. In [this report from the McGill Office of Science and Society](#), scientists disagree, however, on whether it may also somewhat protect us from COVID-19 directly.

How pharmacists play an important role in population health and community wellness

Pharmacists working in the community setting are practicing public health pharmacy practice on a daily basis, but probably just haven’t had a name for it. Different types of public health interventions include epidemiology and surveillance, health teaching, outreach, policy development, screening and social marketing. [Pharmacy Times](#) looks at the 10 essentials of public health and the ways that pharmacists can help with public health.

Worth Repeating

“The time for encouraging, persuading, cajoling and educating workers has passed. There needs to be a stark choice presented to anyone who wants to work in the health system: Get a COVID-19 vaccine or find another line of work.” — [the Globe and Mail’s André Picard](#) doesn’t mince words on health care workers who choose not to be vaccinated

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
[Unsubscribe](#) | [Contact Us](#)