



Canadian  
Pharmacists  
Association

Association des  
pharmaciens  
du Canada

# The Weekly

Bringing the world of pharmacy together

**September 15, 2021**

## **CPhA**

### ***CPhA, politicians, medical groups condemn protests outside hospitals across Canada***

A series of protests—against vaccine mandates and other COVID-19-related public health measures—held outside hospitals across Canada on September 13 were [widely condemned](#) by politicians and health-care organizations, [including CPhA](#). The Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario and the Ontario Medical Association [issued a joint statement](#) condemning the disruptions and calling for designated safe zones around health-care facilities to protect staff and patients. On the campaign trail, Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau, Conservative Leader Erin O'Toole and NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh denounced the protests. [According to CTV](#), Trudeau and Singh also pledged to criminalize protests that block hospitals and other health-care facilities like pharmacies and that threaten or intimidate those who work there.

### ***CPhA launches 2021 federal election priorities***

CPhA has released its [2021 federal election priorities](#) calling on all parties and candidates to demonstrate their commitment to the health of Canadians by acting on a series of 5 critical issues that will strengthen our health-care system now and into the future. CPhA recommends that candidates seeking election during this campaign champion the following issues:

- A national COVID-19 testing strategy
- Addressing the opioid crisis through safe opioid prescribing and use
- Improving access to key health services for Indigenous beneficiaries of NIHB
- Implementing universal pharmacare

- Drug shortages: Ensuring a stable drug supply

Alongside these priorities, CPhA has created other election-related resources: a [presentation deck](#), a [leave-behind](#), which includes a summary of the recommendations, and an [election toolkit](#) with tips and information for pharmacists interested in getting involved during the final week of the election campaign. Remember to vote on September 20!

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## Pharmacy on the frontline

### *Easing pandemic restrictions likely to mean the return of seasonal flu*

Pharmacist Graham MacKenzie, the owner of Stone's Pharmasave in Baddeck, Nova Scotia, [told CBC](#) the COVID-19 measures taken last year created a difficult environment for the flu to take hold. But he said this year will be different. MacKenzie said last year saw one of the biggest uptakes ever for flu shots. He attributes it to people just wanting "to do something" in the midst of the pandemic. He said people were also mindful that having the flu would make COVID-19 even more of a threat, especially for people with compromised immune systems. Diane Harpell, the chair of the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia, said vaccine supplies are expected to arrive next month, and most pharmacies in the province will be offering flu shots.

### *Pharmacists eager to fill health-care void in Newfoundland and Labrador*

As communities across the province struggle with inadequate access to primary health care, nurses and pharmacists want to expand the services they're able to offer, while health officials say help is on the way, [CBC reports](#). Kara O'Keefe, a pharmacist at the Family Drug Mart on Bell Island, said she'd happily step in to fill the health-care gap—that is, if the province would allow it. "It's frustrating because there are definitely more things that we could be doing to help as pharmacists," she said, "but we're simply not allowed to with legislation in this province." O'Keefe said a model like Alberta's, where pharmacists can independently prescribe for high blood pressure, cholesterol and diabetes, could allow pharmacists in the province to use their scope independently. The Pharmacists' Association of Newfoundland and Labrador has also presented data to the provincial government underscoring the need for pharmacists' roles to be expanded.

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## Provincial

### *Nova Scotia pharmacy group promotes mandatory vaccination for health-care workers*

The Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia (PANS) says all health-care workers, including community-based practitioners, should be required to get vaccinated against the virus, [SaltWire reports](#). The emergence of highly contagious COVID-19 variants in Canada is a particular concern, PANS said in a news release. "Some of our most vulnerable populations visit pharmacies and other community providers every day," said Diane Harpell, the chair of PANS. "Health care providers, including pharmacists and pharmacy technicians have a responsibility to ensure that their practice environments are as safe as possible. The evidence is clear: COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective. As key partners in the vaccination program, we believe this is

an important step for Nova Scotia.”

### ***Vaccine demand still strong, say P.E.I. pharmacists***

Pharmacies in P.E.I. are still seeing people come in for their first COVID-19 vaccine, and they say they are hearing a number of reasons why some Islanders delayed getting their first shot, [CBC reports](#). “They were hesitant. They wanted to see how the rollout went,” said Erin MacKenzie, executive director of the Prince Edward Island Pharmacists Association. Low case numbers on the Island led people to think they had time to delay getting a vaccine, MacKenzie added, urging people not to be complacent. “We don’t have a lot of time to get ahead of these variants,” she said. “You have to make sure that we get the largest percentage of the population vaccinated as we possibly can, because it doesn’t take much for, you know, the situation to change.”

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## **National**

### ***‘All in this together’: Party leaders encourage Canadians to get vaccinated***

Five federal party leaders set their political differences aside to record a 1-minute-long video encouraging all Canadians to get vaccinated, [CTV says](#). The [video](#) features Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau, Conservative Leader Erin O’Toole, NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh, Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-François Blanchet and Green Leader Annamie Paul. “We’re all in this together!” the leaders say in unison, while standing 6 feet apart. This video comes at a time when vaccinations have plateaued while COVID-19 cases across the country have continued to climb amid the fourth wave and the Delta variant. As of September 11, just over 77% of eligible Canadians have been fully vaccinated.

### ***National vaccine panel recommends third COVID-19 vaccine dose for immunocompromised people***

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) is now recommending that some immunocompromised people receive 3 doses of a COVID-19 vaccine, [CTV reports](#). The [latest guidance](#) says that “moderately to severely immunocompromised” individuals who have not yet been immunized should receive 3 doses of an authorized mRNA vaccine. Those who have already completed a series of an mRNA or a viral vector vaccine should get an additional dose of either the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccine, NACI recommends. The province of Quebec is already offering booster shots for the immunocompromised and for travellers whose mixed dosing isn’t recognized in other countries. Alberta and Ontario are also rolling out third shots for eligible immunocompromised populations.

### ***Some provinces release guidance on COVID-19, flu shot co-administration, but no national recommendation yet***

Co-administering COVID-19 vaccines and the flu vaccine has been endorsed by some provinces, including BC and Saskatchewan, but a national consensus recommendation from NACI has not yet been announced. The BC Centre for Disease Control updated its guidance [on](#)

[the Immunize BC website](#) without a formal statement, saying “COVID-19 vaccines can be given at the same time or any time before or after any other live or inactivated vaccine,” while the [Saskatchewan Ministry of Health announced on September 2](#) that intervals are no longer required between COVID-19 vaccines and other shots. These provincial guidelines are in line with similar recommendations from the [US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) and the [UK’s Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency](#).

### ***Opioid poisoning response added to Red Cross first aid and CPR training***

To help save lives, the Canadian Red Cross has added training to identify and respond to opioid poisoning in all its first aid and cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) programs offered across the country, [according to a news release](#). The program modification represents the first of a series of Red Cross measures funded by Health Canada’s Substance Use and Addictions Program to help reduce opioid-related deaths by increasing Canadians’ access to response training and naloxone. Red Cross expects to provide opioid poisoning response training to 1.5 million Canadians over the next 3 years, starting with a self-directed online training platform in 2022.

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## **International**

### ***US: How pharmacists are dealing with the surge of shady ivermectin prescriptions***

Last week, a patient entered Rachel Lee’s pharmacy in an affluent San Diego neighborhood to ask about his ivermectin prescription, [Slate reports](#). When she called the doctor’s office for more information, an employee said the ivermectin was for prophylactic COVID treatment. Lee turned the patient away. Demand for ivermectin, which in tablet form is used to treat parasitic worms in humans, has surged 24-fold because of the scientifically unsupported belief that it can treat or prevent COVID-19. While some pharmacies fill these prescriptions, many others are having to turn away frustrated patients. “We’re put in a tough spot,” said Lee. “I have been very strict with it, just because at the end of the day, it is my license.” On September 1, a trio of leading national health-care groups—the American Pharmacist Association, the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists and the American Medical Association—issued [a joint statement](#) calling for an end to the ordering, prescribing and dispensing ivermectin for COVID-19 prevention or treatment.

### ***US: Pharmacies near Canadian border sell out of take-home COVID-19 kits as testing demand spikes***

A high demand for COVID-19 testing in communities near Maine’s border with Canada has resulted in pharmacies selling out of take-home testing kits, [Bangor Daily News says](#). Canada does not accept test results from rapid-results antigen testing kits, which is the kind most often found in Maine pharmacies, so the statewide increase in cases and contact tracing is most likely why pharmacies are sold out. “The test requirement for travel to Canada plays a role,” Robert Long, spokesman for Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention said on September 7. “The increase in cases, which leads to more testing of close contacts, also contributes to

increased demand. Our testing coordinator has been in touch with pharmacies and health care providers in Washington County and Aroostook County to discuss ways to add testing capacity.”

### ***Australia: Pharmacies help boost COVID-19 vaccination rate***

Pharmacists say the number of COVID-19 shots being given in store is rising significantly and have backed the industry to do even more to boost the vaccination rate in the state of Western Australia, [PerthNow reports](#). COVID-19 vaccination appointments in pharmacies have effectively doubled in the past 2 weeks, with more than 13 000 AstraZeneca vaccinations now administered in the state’s pharmacies. Andrew Ngeow, the Pharmacy Guild of Australia Western Australia Branch president said if supply issues were ironed out, pharmacists could make a major difference in the speed of the vaccine rollout. “Community pharmacies were the last group of providers activated by the Commonwealth Government and therefore lowest in number, but the real point remains that we must all get vaccinated,” he said.

### ***France: France to offer free birth control to all women up to age 25***

France will offer free birth control to all women up to age 25 starting next year, Health Minister Olivier Véran announced September 9, [according to the Associated Press](#). All contraceptive methods were already free for those up to 18 years of age, and that is being expanded to all women up to 25. Without citing specific data, Veran said young women are using contraception less than they used to due to financial barriers. France’s state health-care system covers some birth control costs but not all of them. “It’s intolerable that women . . . aren’t able to use contraception if they make that choice, because it would cost too much,” Véran said. Several other European countries, including Britain and Spain, offer free or subsidized contraception.

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## **In-Depth**

### ***Hardly any Canadians caught the flu last year. What can we expect this fall?***

Flu season didn’t really happen last year in Canada. Measurements of flu stayed so low all year that it actually never passed the threshold the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) normally uses to declare the start of the season—usually in the fall. PHAC recorded 69 influenza detections in the 2020–21 flu season in its final FluWatch report on August 28. Normally, around 52 000 cases are detected. Flu had a quiet year because we were taking precautions against COVID-19, experts say. But what will this year look like? [Global News talks to experts](#) about what this year’s flu season has in store for Canadians.

### ***Ivermectin frenzy: The advocates, anti-vaxxers and telehealth companies driving demand***

Driving the ivermectin frenzy is a cottage industry of advocacy groups, anti-vaccine activists and telehealth companies. Touting the drug as a “miracle cure” for COVID-19, these groups have rapidly risen to prominence, finding a fervent audience among conservative media figures, the vaccine-hesitant and people desperate to treat loved ones suffering from the virus. [The Guardian takes a look](#) at how the anti-parasitic drug became the so-called “solution” to COVID-19.

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## Worth Repeating

“Honestly, I didn’t expect it to be so sad. Dispiriting, sure: a protest outside a hospital, 18 months into a pandemic, as burned out health-care workers stared down at people who statistically may be the most likely to end up inside a hospital with COVID-19. There had been vows online to block ambulances, and even isolated threats of guns from some People’s Party of Canada supporters. There is a virus in this country, beyond the obvious one.” — Toronto Star columnist Bruce Arthur [on the anti-vaccination protests](#) outside Canadian hospitals this week

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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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