



Canadian
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Association
Association des
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CPhA

CPhA survey: Positive impression of pharmacists continue to rise

[A survey](#) commissioned by CPhA in advance of World Pharmacists Day on Sept. 25 indicates that pharmacy patients see and appreciate the extraordinary efforts and dedication of the profession throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Among the findings:

- 95% of Canadians have a positive impression of pharmacists. Older Canadians in particular rate pharmacists more positively, as they have had more contact with pharmacists since the pandemic began.
- 64% of Canadians think pharmacists are essential to the health-care system—up 3 points from before the pandemic and 10 points since 2015.
- 96% of Canadians trust pharmacists a great deal (46%) or somewhat (50%) to be an important first point of contact for the health-care system.
- 90% of Canadians think pharmacy professionals and pharmacies were important during the national COVID-19 vaccine rollout and 46% feel they were very important.

Pharmacists on the front lines

Michael Kovrig gets first COVID vaccine dose at east-end Toronto pharmacy

When Toronto pharmacist Kyro Maseh heard that Michael Kovrig had returned home and planned to visit his clinic to get his first dose of vaccine, he was surprised and thrilled to be a part

of it, [the Toronto Star reports](#). The pharmacist gave Kovrig his first COVID-19 vaccine Sept. 27, but not before welcoming him into the pharmacy with music and applause from pharmacy staff. Maseh said Kovrig's vaccination was a welcome juxtaposition from a weekend that saw anti-vaccine protesters who claim vaccine passports are an infringement on their personal freedoms attempt to force their way into the Eaton Centre. "I think that [Kovrig] is more qualified to speak about the value of freedom than most on this planet," Maseh said. "He felt that in order for him to exercise his freedom, he had to ensure his safety first. And that's exactly why he got vaccinated."

Halifax pharmacist offers advice to combat vaccine hesitancy among adults 18-40 years old

Halifax pharmacist Diane Harpell says it's important to help young adults aged 18-40 feel more comfortable about getting the COVID-19 vaccine. "When we think about flu seasons in the past, you don't see a lot of this age group generally coming in," she explained [in an interview with CTV](#). "I think that we need to make sure what we're doing is really talking about how easy and how little time it takes for folks to get these vaccines," Harpell, who is also the chair of the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia, added. "It takes 2 seconds to sign up and get registered, especially now." But some people still resist getting the COVID-19 shot in spite of the medical community's repeated assurances that the vaccines are safe. Harpell said the more people that get vaccinated, the sooner we can begin to experience some normalcy again.

Provincial

Pharmacy suspended from COVID-19 vaccine program after syringes reused

British Columbia's Fraser Health Authority says it has stopped a pharmacy from administering COVID-19 vaccines after learning syringes—the plastic tube that holds the vaccine solution, not the needle—were reused on patients, [according to CBC](#). The health authority said the College of Pharmacists of British Columbia is investigating and the pharmacist involved is not currently administering vaccinations. The BC Pharmacy Association (BCPhA) said it was made aware of the incident and "immediately took steps to ensure the pharmacy did not administer additional vaccines." It says the college is "moving quickly" to figure out how the safety breach happened "because we want to ensure patients are safe, and that there is no doubt about the COVID-19 vaccine program." Pharmacists in BC have been able to administer vaccines since 2009 and are trained to use a separate sterile needle and syringe for each injection, which is a requirement of the Canadian Immunization Guide, BCPhA added.

Alberta pharmacists warned not to dispense ivermectin for COVID-sick people

Some Alberta pharmacists have received a warning from their regulatory group for spreading misinformation about COVID-19 and dispensing ivermectin to people sick with the virus, [according to CityNews](#). The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta (CPSA) and the Alberta College of Pharmacy (ACP) both say they've received some concerning reports about doctors and pharmacists prescribing and filling orders of the horse dewormer to be used in humans, not on livestock. "There is no evidence that ivermectin in either formulation is safe or

effective when used for those purposes. The human version of ivermectin is authorized for sale in Canada only for the treatment of parasitic worm infections in people,” the CPSA and ACP wrote in a joint statement. “There is certainly significant risk of patient harm when ivermectin is used in the prevention and treatment of COVID-19. CPSA and ACP do not believe these behaviours align with a physician’s or pharmacist’s professional responsibility to their patients.”

Tensions mount as vaccine mandates loom, says Manitoba pharmacist

Earlier in the COVID-19 vaccination campaign, many showed up to supersites and pharmacies at the first opportunity and enthusiastically rolled up their sleeves. But amid looming government vaccine mandates, the general mood has taken a turn, pharmacist Colette Dunlop said [in an interview with CBC](#). Dunlop runs a small pharmacy in La Broquerie, Manitoba, where she says most people coming in to get the shot now are frustrated, saying they feel forced and aren’t happy to be there. Some are reluctant to sign consent forms and have “just sat there and cried because they really don’t want it,” Dunlop said. “So I’ve had to just help support them through it and just try to talk to them, like, ‘It’s going to be OK.’” Attitudes may not improve anytime soon, with vaccine deadlines coming into effect for a range of public-facing provincial government workers next month.

Ontario pharmacists report rise in harassment surrounding COVID-19 vaccines

Less than a week after Ontario began enforcing its vaccine certificate, pharmacists and family physicians say they’re receiving more harassment from anti-vaxxers, [CTV reports](#). “There’s no question we’ve come across a number of precarious scenarios where there’s been abuse or harassment and I think that’s a shared concern across the health-care system,” Justin Bates, CEO of the Ontario Pharmacists Association (OPA) said. Mina Maseh, the owner of a pharmacy in Scarborough, Ontario, said the majority of customer interactions have been positive, but the stress from the increased harassment recently forced one of his assistants to quit. “As a pharmacist, it gets very stressful. We feel an unbelievable amount of burnout,” Maseh said. “We know by vaccinating we’re saving lives but also feel like at times we are being abused and have no way to fight back.” According to OPA, these incidents have been increasing and there are concerns about what that means for health-care professionals.

Pharmacy suspends COVID-19 vaccinations following alleged assault

Police in Sherbrooke, Quebec, are looking for a man they say assaulted a nurse after telling her she needed his permission to give a COVID-19 vaccine to his wife, [CBC reports](#). The man accused the nurse of “vaccinating his wife without [his] consent and then hit her several times in the face,” a spokesperson for the Sherbrooke police said. The nurse, a woman in her 40s, was treated in hospital for injuries to her face and a possible concussion. COVID-19 vaccinations at the pharmacy have since been suspended until further notice because there is only 1 nurse working there. Benoit Morin, president of the Association québécoise des pharmaciens propriétaires (AQPP), said he’s never heard of anything like this happening before. He said people have handed out pamphlets against the vaccination outside of pharmacies administering the COVID-19 shot, but that’s usually been the extent of the tension. If similar situations begin to

arise, Morin said pharmacists will have to rethink the way they work—and the need for security: “We need to work; patients need to be secure.”

Getting the flu shot is more important than ever: pharmacist

Throughout the pandemic, the COVID-19 vaccine has been top of mind for many Canadians. But now that fall is here and winter is around the corner, pharmacists are urging people to get their flu shots as well. “Getting vaccinated, both with the COVID-19 vaccine and the flu vaccine, is safe and effective,” Halifax-based pharmacist Angela MacNeil said [in an interview with Global News](#). “And really, it’s the only way, the only option we have to help protect the vulnerable in our community this fall and winter as we are starting to battle the fourth wave of COVID.” Getting the flu shot this year is more important than ever to avoid overloading the health-care system, which is already stretched thin, with preventable flu hospitalizations. The flu season last year was subdued, in part due to the public health restrictions put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19. But now that more people are vaccinated against COVID-19 and those restrictions are starting to lift, MacNeil said the risk of catching the flu can increase.

National

COVID-19 vaccines can be administered at the same time as other vaccines: NACI recommendation

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) has [released its recommendation](#) on the co-administration of COVID-19 vaccines and flu shots, saying COVID-19 vaccines can now be administered at the same time as other live, non-live, adjuvanted and non-adjuvanted vaccines. The previous cautionary guidance had specified vaccines should not be given simultaneously with the COVID-19 vaccines. This is an important development as we embark on a busy fall immunization season during which first, second and possibly third COVID-19 vaccine doses will be administered, as well as influenza and pneumococcal vaccines. Saving patients the inconvenience of repeated visits to their pharmacies for these doses will help to optimize immunization rates and address vaccine hesitancy.

Health Minister expects Pfizer submission for kids’ COVID-19 vaccine in October

Health Minister Patty Hajdu said she expects a submission from Pfizer in the coming weeks for the use of the company’s COVID-19 vaccine in children aged 5 to 11, [according to CTV](#). Hajdu said government health officials have been in constant contact with Pfizer regarding vaccine data. “We anticipate that we’ll get a submission, hopefully in the early stages of October,” she said. “As soon as we receive the data from the company, the regulators are well-situated to rapidly review that data.” The pharmaceutical company stated last week that its vaccine is effective in children aged 5 to 11. Pfizer said it has submitted study data to the US Food and Drug Administration and expects to apply for the emergency authorization of its use for children south of the border in the coming weeks.

Poll: Tensions high as vaccinated Canadians find the unvaccinated selfish

A new poll suggests tensions over COVID-19 vaccines in Canada are high as frictions grow between those who are vaccinated against the virus and those who are not, [the Canadian Press reports](#). The Leger survey, conducted for the Association of Canadian Studies, found that more than 3 in 4 respondents hold negative views of those who are not immunized. The survey found vaccinated people consider the unvaccinated as irresponsible and selfish—a view contested by those who are not immunized. Some members of the latter group have been staging demonstrations outside hospitals and schools in recent weeks to protest vaccine passports and other public health measures. “There’s a high level of . . . antipathy or animosity toward people who are unvaccinated at this time,” association president Jack Jedwab said. “What you are seeing is the tension played out among family members and friends, co-workers, where there are relationships between people who are vaccinated and unvaccinated.”

International

US: Antibiotic prescriptions plummeted during first year of COVID-19 pandemic

There was a dramatic drop in antibiotic prescriptions in the US in 2020, according to new research published in JAMA Network Open—a surprising upside to the COVID-19 pandemic in the global fight against antibiotic resistance, [Forbes reports](#). The study tracked adult and child prescriptions for 9 of the 10 most prescribed antibiotics, finding outpatient prescriptions for the 4 most commonly prescribed antibiotics plummeted during 2020. While the number of prescriptions filled in the first 3 months of 2020 were in line with pre-pandemic trends, there was a sharp decline in prescriptions for amoxicillin, amoxicillin-clavulanate, doxycycline and azithromycin over the rest of the year. It is unclear precisely what is behind the drop, the researchers said, but they speculated it’s the result of declining levels of respiratory illness thanks to pandemic precautions and high numbers of people deferring medical care. The 4 antibiotics with the most pronounced drops were ones often used to manage respiratory infections and that are frequently used inappropriately to treat viral infections, the researchers noted.

US: Pharmacy chains begin offering Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 booster shots

With the US Food and Drug Administration [granting emergency use authorization](#) for booster shots of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for certain vulnerable groups, retailers began administering third shots to eligible patients on Sept. 25, [according to Drug Store News](#). CVS, Rite Aid, Walgreens, Walmart, and Sam’s Club have all started offering the booster shot for patients older than 65 years old, long-term care facility residents, immunocompromised people over 18, and adults at increased risk due to occupational or institutional setting. It needs to be at least 6 months since their last dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. Just over the past weekend at pharmacies alone, over 400 000 Americans received the additional protection of a booster, and almost 1 million people have already scheduled their booster shot through pharmacies over the coming weeks, the White House COVID-19 response coordinator [told reporters](#).

In-Depth

Add pharmacists to the list of burned-out health-care workers

Often overlooked, pharmacists face much of the same pressure as other health-care professionals on the front lines of the pandemic. They've been asked to take on more work, playing a vital role in administering COVID-19 tests and vaccines. As they interact with larger numbers of customers, their risk of infection increases. Some have left retail pharmacies for other clinical settings or quit the profession entirely. Others say they're not sure how much longer they can sustain the status quo. [Crain's Chicago Business](#) looks at burnout among pharmacy workers.

Worth Repeating

"If Michael Kovrig, a man who just spent 1,020 days in a Chinese prison, can make it a priority to get a COVID-19 vaccine—and use his notoriety to promote vaccination to boot—surely no one else has an excuse for not doing so." — the *Globe and Mail's* André Picard [tweeting the news](#) that Michael Kovrig received his first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine from Toronto pharmacist Kyro Maseh

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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