



CANADIAN
PHARMACISTS
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DU CANADA

October 14, 2016

Hon. Jane Philpott, P.C., M.P.
70 Colombine Driveway
Tunney's Pasture
Postal Location: 0906C
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0K9

Dear Minister Philpott:

As you enter into discussions with your provincial and territorial colleagues on a new Health Accord, the Canadian Pharmacists Association (CPhA) would like to reiterate its support for the priorities the federal government has identified, in particular improving access to drugs and pharmacy services, investing in innovation and ensuring fairness for Canada's Indigenous peoples. We would also urge health ministers to take this opportunity to address the urgent opioid crisis and discuss the public health ramifications of policy decisions around medical and recreational marijuana.

Enhancing Drug Access

We strongly believe that all Canadians should have access to the drugs and health care services they need to be healthy. We also recognize that the federal government has committed itself to "improving access to necessary prescription medications." CPhA fully supports this goal and further believes that pharmacists can play a critical role in managing and supporting the appropriate use of drug therapies.

CPhA recommends that the federal government, working with all provincial and territorial governments, take steps towards creating a drug access fund that would, among other things, provide a basic form of prescription drug coverage for uninsured Canadians, ensure a harmonized catastrophic coverage program to better protect Canadians from financial hardship, and ensure pharmacy services are fully leveraged to improve health outcomes and value for health care dollars.

Innovation

Fostering innovation in digital health and health care delivery provides great opportunities for efficiencies and improved health outcomes. As you well know, Canada is woefully behind in the uptake of digital health technologies and one of the major barriers that pharmacists encounter on a day-to-day basis is the lack of a national e-prescribing system. We strongly encourage you and your provincial and territorial counterparts to move ahead with such a system that can be portable across provinces.

The creation and harmonization of comprehensive digital health technologies like a national e-prescribing system, Drug Information Systems (DIS), Electronic Medical Records (EMR), and Electronic Health Records (EHR) would facilitate enhanced collaboration between health care providers and improve their ability to manage patients' chronic conditions.



We also want to encourage you to consider providing more support for innovative practices in the way health care is delivered. Optimizing scopes of practice for pharmacists will go a long way to addressing many of the challenges that we have, including the lack of resources for mental health, home and community care.

Indigenous Health

Finally, we know the federal government has committed to a renewed relationship with Canada's Indigenous peoples. One area of focus should be the Non-Insured Health Benefits Program (NIHB), as it does not currently provide the same level of access to health benefits as other Canadians receive. While many Canadians have coverage for pharmacy services such as medication reviews and chronic disease management services through public plans, NIHB does not cover any pharmacy services for Indigenous Canadians.

CPhA is recommending the federal government provide equitable access to health care for Indigenous peoples through increased funding for the NIHB, including equitable access to publicly funded services provided by pharmacists.

Funding and Consultations

All of these areas will require additional funding and so we strongly urge you and your provincial/territorial colleagues to look for a balanced approach. Both targeted funding and a renewed long-term funding agreement will be key to the future sustainability of our health care system.

Services provided by pharmacists, such as medication reviews, patient care plans and minor ailment assessments, are no longer feasible in many jurisdictions due to funding cuts – despite the value these key services provide to the health care system and improving patient outcomes.

While we understand that discussions between governments on a new Health Accord are still in the early stages, we nevertheless urge you and your colleagues to open up a direct dialogue with Canada's health care provider community. We believe that Canada's health care providers can and must be an essential partner in achieving a new successful Health Accord.

Opioids and Marijuana Policy

In addition to discussion on a new Health Accord, we would also urge health ministers to take this opportunity to address the urgent crisis that many communities across Canada are dealing with when it comes to opioid abuse and misuse. If we are to address the opioid crisis, CPhA believes a holistic multi-stakeholder approach is needed. Canadian pharmacists are on the front-lines of this issue and have solutions that can help governments achieve meaningful progress on addressing this crisis. We need a national strategy focused on prevention, control and addiction management that must include instituting a maximum of dispensed quantities of narcotics, effective pain management, integrated monitoring systems and addiction treatment programs.



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While the opioid crisis is urgent, Canada's pharmacists are also concerned about national policy developments related to medical and recreational marijuana. CPhA believes it is critical that continued access to cannabis for medical purposes is maintained in a legalized context. Diverting patients away from the existing medical stream, absent the care and oversight of a licensed health care professional, would put patient health at serious risk. Therefore we need to have a dual marijuana market—one for medical and one for recreational purposes. As well, CPhA is also recommending a health promotion and awareness campaign to educate the public about the potential harms of marijuana use, including the possibility of interaction with prescription drugs, and responsible consumption through regulated suppliers.

We wish you and your colleagues a successful meeting and we look forward to the opportunity to further discuss our recommended priorities with you and how the pharmacist profession can work with government to build a health care system that delivers better health, better care and better value for all Canadians.

Sincerely,

Alistair Bursey, B.Sc (Hons), B.Sc.Pharm
Chair

Perry Eisenschmid, BBA, MBA, C.Dir., H.R.C.C.C.
Chief Executive Officer

cc: All Provincial and Territorial Health Ministers