



Canadian
Pharmacists
Association

Association des
pharmaciens
du Canada

The Weekly

Bringing the world of pharmacy together

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CPhA

Ozempic shortage: New resources for pharmacy professionals

With an ongoing shortage impacting the Ozempic 1 mg dose pen, CPhA has collaborated with medSask on a pair of resources to provide guidance for managing the shortage and alternative therapies:

- [Ozempic 1 mg Subcutaneous Injection for Treatment of Diabetes](#)
- [Ozempic 1 mg Subcutaneous Injection for Off-Label Treatment of Obesity](#)

The shortage, which is due to overall global supply constraints and increased demand, is anticipated to continue through early October 2023 when a more stable product supply is expected. More information can be found on CPhA's [Ozempic shortage resource page](#).

Webinar recording available – Pharmacare: Why now?

With the federal government expected to introduce pharmacare legislation this fall, the national discussion surrounding pharmacare is getting louder. Join CPhA's Sadaf Faisal, the director of professional affairs, and Adam Wilson, the

director of government relations, for this insightful discussion about pharmacare in Canada and the ongoing deliberations concerning its implementation. Explore the current political background and why now may be the most likely time in decades for Canada to make progress towards national pharmacare. The webinar recording is available to all members and stakeholders of the pharmacy community. [Watch or listen to a recording of the session.](#)

Pharmacy on the front lines

Edmonton pharmacy administers first RSV vaccine in Alberta

On September 8, the Lakeland Ridge Shoppers Drug Mart in Edmonton, Alberta, was the first pharmacy in Canada—and first location in the province—to administer the new vaccine for respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). Health Canada approved the vaccine in early August for people aged 60 and over. Deepak Narang, associate owner and pharmacist at the pharmacy, [told CTV News](#) that in younger adults, symptoms are similar to that of the common cold—such as coughing, sneezing, fatigue, headache and fever—but in older adults with underlying disease conditions, such as lung disease, asthma, COPD or various heart conditions, the risk of serious illness is higher. “It can lead to severe lower respiratory tract disease, causing bronchitis or pneumonia, leading to hospitalizations, ICU admissions or even death,” Narang said.

Mock robberies are part of the training for pharmacy assistants at Fanshawe College

Aspiring pharmacy assistants attending Fanshawe College in London, Ontario, don’t know when it will happen, but they’ll learn firsthand what it’s like to be held up on the job through surprise mock robbery scenarios. Originally only part of the pharmacy technician program, mock robberies have been added to the curriculum for community pharmacy assistant students. “When we’ve run the mock robbery scenario, the students do not know that it’s going to take place. It’s all kept under wraps,” Lyona Lunter, the program’s coordinator, [told CBC](#). Lunter has been organizing these role-play scenarios for 5 years, inspired by actual robberies that she and other faculty members have lived through. Students from Fanshawe’s Police Foundations program play the

robber and are instructed to make it feel real. “There could be a threat of fake weapons, threats of violence, there’s harsh language involved. It can get really intense,” Lunter said.

National

Health Canada approves Moderna’s updated COVID-19 vaccine

Health Canada has approved the use of Moderna’s Spikevax XBB.1.5 COVID-19 vaccine for all Canadians over the age of 6 months, [CTV News reports](#). Officials from Health Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada and the National Advisory Committee on Immunization discussed details of the approval during a technical briefing on September 12. Dr. Supriya Sharma, chief medical adviser with Health Canada, said recommendations include 1 dose for people 5 years old and older—regardless of COVID-19 vaccination history—1 dose for children under 4 who have received a previous dose of a vaccine, and 2 doses for children between 6 months and 4 years old who haven’t been vaccinated against COVID-19. Health Canada is also reviewing a submission by Pfizer-BioNTech to have its Omicron XBB.1.5 vaccine approved for use in people 6 months and older, as well as a submission by Novavax for its Omicron XBB.1.5 vaccine for people 12 years and older.

Feds award \$15 million contract to Sun Life to lay groundwork for dental care program

The federal government has awarded a contract worth up to \$15 million to lay the groundwork for a new national dental insurance plan, [the Canadian Press reports](#). The new plan, which was a key demand from the NDP as part of its supply and confidence agreement with the governing Liberals, will replace the interim dental benefit for kids rolled out last year. Procurement Minister Jean-Yves Duclos and Health Minister Mark Holland announced on September 6 that the first contract for the new program was awarded to Sun Life Assurance Company of Canada. The federal government said this interim agreement will allow for the “timely launch and successful operation” of the plan. “The main contract is expected to be awarded in fall 2023, pending Government of Canada approval,” a news release said.

International

US: APhA pens open letter to pharmacists following news reports of dispensing errors

On September 8, the American Pharmacists Association (APhA) [published an open letter to pharmacists](#) following several news stories about pharmacist dispensing errors that it said reflect negatively on the pharmacy profession. “When one sector of our profession is being attacked in the media, our entire profession’s credibility is undermined. As the voice of the profession, it’s APhA’s responsibility to address these issues directly,” APhA CEO Michael Hogue wrote in the letter. “While the incidents reported are tragic, the fact is that people make errors when systems do not fully support the individuals responsible for providing care.” Hogue noted understaffing of pharmacies is a major issue afflicting the profession, creating a work environment that isn’t ideal to support optimal patient care. He added that “APhA is fully aware of this” and is “working very hard” to drive change.

US: Popular over-the-counter medicines for colds and allergies don’t work, FDA panel says

Phenylephrine, a popular ingredient in many over-the-counter allergy and cold medicines, is ineffective in tablet form, an independent advisory committee to the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) agreed on September 12, [CNN reports](#). Phenylephrine is the main ingredient used in nasal decongestant products like Benadryl Allergy Plus Congestion, Sudafed PE and Vicks Sinex. The ingredient is considered safe to use; that was not up for debate. But many doctors have questioned phenylephrine’s effectiveness for years. These products generated nearly US\$1.8 billion (the equivalent of CAD\$2.4 billion) in sales last year alone, according to data from the FDA that was presented to the Nonprescription Drugs Advisory Committee on September 11 during the committee’s 2-day meeting.

US: Biden administration takes abortion pill dispute to Supreme Court

President Joe Biden’s administration took its battle to preserve broad access to the abortion pill mifepristone to the US Supreme Court on September 8 as it appealed a lower court’s ruling that would curb how the drug is delivered and

distributed, [Reuters reports](#). The Justice Department said it filed its appeal of an August decision by the New Orleans–based 5th US Circuit Court of Appeals that would bar telemedicine prescriptions and shipments of mifepristone by mail. The drug’s manufacturer, Danco Laboratories, also said it filed its appeal on September 8. The 5th Circuit’s decision is currently on hold pending the outcome of the administration’s appeal at the Supreme Court. The Justice Department in its filing said that allowing the 5th Circuit’s restrictions to take effect would have “damaging consequences for women seeking lawful abortions and a health-care system that relies on the availability of the drug under the current conditions of use.”

Ireland: Pharmacies forced to refuse women seeking free contraception under new scheme

Irish pharmacists are turning away patients seeking access to free, routine contraception as confusion grows over why it is not available without a prescription, [the Irish Examiner reports](#). Women can receive the emergency morning-after pill from pharmacies, but a new government scheme offering free routine contraception to women aged 17 to 30 is available only with a doctor’s prescription. “Already there are [patients] who contact us saying, ‘Can I get my pill?’ and we have to say, ‘No, you need a prescription for it,’” said Irish Pharmacy Union officer and pharmacist Tom Murray. He said the scheme will mean additional pressure on doctors. “Allowing pharmacies to directly supply contraception on foot of a structured consultation would be safe, accessible, and convenient for patients and provide benefits for the health system as a whole, as resources would be utilized more effectively,” Murray added.

In Depth

What Canadians need to know about COVID-19 rapid tests as fall approaches

With the impending fall flu season and the continued circulation of new COVID-19 variants across the country, attention is once again turning to rapid antigen tests. However, this flu season is different from the last, as the federal government stopped its shipments of rapid tests to the provinces and territories, meaning Canadians may have to look a little harder to find them, or even pay out of pocket, experts say. Given the dwindling supply, increasing

numbers of expired tests and the emergence of new COVID-19 variants in the country, the question arises: Are rapid tests still effective? [Global News explains](#).

Waiting for new drugs for rare disorders in Canada

Canadians living with rare disorders are seriously disadvantaged compared to those in the US and Europe because fewer new drugs for rare disorders come to Canada. When developers do bring drugs, Canada has barriers that delay or deny access for patients with unmet or poorly met health-care needs. [This commentary](#) originally published in *Inside Policy Magazine* looks at the disadvantages Canadians with rare disorders face in accessing needed, innovative drugs.

This weekly update is compiled by the Canadian Pharmacists Association. While we aim to ensure all information contained in this update is accurate, CPhA does not take responsibility for the content provided by other organizations and sources.

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