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Canadian
Pharmacists
Association

Association des
pharmaciens
du Canada

The Weekly

Bringing the world of pharmacy together

August 16, 2023

The Weekly is taking a summer vacation and will return on September 6, 2023!

CPhA

CPhA meets with new Minister of Health to discuss issues facing pharmacists

On August 11, CPhA [met with new Minister of Health Mark Holland](#) about the rapidly expanding role of pharmacists in primary care and some of the issues pharmacists are facing, including a health human resource crisis, drug shortages and pharmacare. The meeting follows [a letter](#) written to Holland on August 9, congratulating him on his appointment to the role and outlining our priorities for the federal government. “As the national organization representing Canada’s over 44 000 pharmacists from coast to coast to coast, we look forward to building on the strong relationship we had with Minister Duclos, as well as his staff and department officials,” the letter reads. “Your appointment as Minister of Health comes at a critical time for Canadians. Our health human resources crisis, ongoing and pronounced drug shortages, and pending pharmacare legislation are all issues that have a significant impact on pharmacy practice and on the patients we serve.”

Pharmacy on the front lines

Fort Frances, ON, pharmacies see lower demand for COVID-19 boosters

Several Fort Frances, Ontario, pharmacies say they are currently not offering COVID-19 booster vaccines due to low demand and minimum batch requirements. Pharmasave pharmacist Venkata Donthi Reddy [told the Fort Frances Times](#) that he hasn't found a need to order COVID-19 boosters for the past month. "It's been a while," he said. "We don't want to place an order under waste." Noting that booster vaccines have to be stored properly and come with an expiry date, Donthi Reddy said his pharmacy hasn't placed an order for the next shipment since the latest batch expired on July 31. David Schwartz, the manager and owner of the town's Safeway Pharmacy, noted the same issue regarding proper storage and says they are not offering COVID-19 booster vaccines. "Demand is very low. And we can only order [the vaccines] in large batches. And it doesn't make sense for us when the health unit is able to store them in the proper low temperature freezers for much longer than we can," Schwartz said.

Provincial

Ontario boosts max claims pharmacies can submit for tick bite minor ailments services

The Ontario Ministry of Health has boosted the maximum number of reimbursement claims for minor ailments services related tick bites, post-exposure prophylaxis of Lyme disease from 2 to 4 per year, [Canadian Healthcare Network reports](#) (subscription access only). The change took effect July 29, 2023, and is meant to reflect the higher risk for tick bites and subsequent issues like Lyme disease in the province. An Executive Officer Notice noted that the Health Network System will continue to determine whether the max number of claims have been submitted by looking back 365 days from the claim's date of service.

National

More greenhouse gas than the auto sector: CSHP releases plan for pharmacy to fight climate crisis

The Canadian Society of Hospital Pharmacists (CSHP) has released draft recommendations around how pharmacy can help fight the climate crisis, [Canadian Healthcare Network reports](#) (subscription access only). The [draft recommendations](#), which were made in collaboration with the Canadian Association of Pharmacy for the Environment, explain health care generates large amounts of greenhouse gas emissions—more than 33 million tons annually in Canada—and more than 200 000 tons of pollutant emissions. Globally, emissions from the pharmaceutical industry surpass those of the automotive industry. Ensuring medications are used optimally could save more than 202 tons of greenhouse gas emissions per 100 000 population. The recommendations offer suggestions to minimize pharmacy's impact, such as including education about environmental sustainability at all conferences, adding it to pharmacy school curriculums, and developing a planetary health education series. CSHP is seeking [input](#) from pharmacists until August 25.

Many older Canadians don't always fill new prescriptions: study

A study of Canadian patients in primary health care showed that as many as 17% of them failed to get new drug prescriptions filled within 6 months of the prescription date, [the BayToday reports](#). The study was published this week in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* and examined the actions of more than 34 000 patients between January 2013 and April 2019 in British Columbia. The findings were that more than 150 000 new prescriptions for 34 243 patients were never filled. The study found the highest numbers were for drugs prescribed on an "as-needed" basis, which included topical corticosteroids (35.1%) and antihistamines (23.4%). Nonadherence for new prescriptions did not happen as much with younger patients, and the study suggests patients 65 and older, and with multiple prescriptions, are more likely not to get new prescriptions filled in a timely manner.

International

US: Hospital pharmacists rationing drugs as shortages persist, survey

reveals

Nearly a third of US hospital pharmacists say they have been forced to ration, delay or cancel treatments as drug shortages in the US approach an all-time high, according to a survey released on August 10, [Reuters reports](#). The shortages are especially critical for chemotherapy drugs used in cancer treatment regimens, with more than half of the 1123 surveyed saying they had to limit the use of such treatments. The survey was conducted between June 23 and July 14 by the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP), which represents more than 60 000 pharmacists and technicians. “In some cases, there are no alternatives to the affected drugs, which puts patients at risk. This issue requires quick action from Congress to address the underlying causes of shortages and ensure patients have the medications they need,” said ASHP CEO Paul Abramowitz. The number of US drugs facing shortages—at 309 by the end of the second quarter—is already near a 10-year peak, according to ASHP, compared with an all-time high of 320 drugs.

Ireland: Majority favour pharmacists offering contraceptive care, minor ailments prescribing, IPU survey finds

The vast majority of Irish adults (86%) want pharmacists to offer contraceptive care, while 96% favour pharmacists being able to prescribe for minor ailments, a new survey from the Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU) has found, [the Irish Examiner reports](#). The Pharmacy Index 2023, carried out by B&A on behalf of IPU, looked at reactions to plans for potentially expanding pharmacists’ roles, including independent prescribing. Health Minister Stephen Donnelly has appointed an expert taskforce to make recommendations in this area. Almost all respondents, 98%, said they value the advice a pharmacist gives them and 9 in 10 agreed the pharmacist’s role is becoming more important. “There is huge potential for pharmacies to expand the range of health-care services they provide,” said Kathy Maher, the chair of IPU’s pharmacy contractors committee. “As the new expert taskforce commences its work, it is heartening to see that patients across the country want to avail of these new services.”

Australia: ACT pharmacies join NSW’s UTI treatment trial

Patients in Canberra will have a new way to access treatments for uncomplicated urinary tract infections (UTIs) at select Australian Capital Territory (ACT) pharmacies as part of a new trial, [Mirage News reports](#). The

ACT government has secured an agreement with the NSW government for ACT pharmacies to participate in the NSW-led trial. The trial will evaluate the effectiveness and safety of pharmacists prescribing antibiotics to treat uncomplicated UTIs in women and people with a uterus aged between 18-65. Minister for Health Rachel Stephen-Smith said the 12-month trial supports the ACT government's commitment to improving health care access and outcomes across the community. "Pharmacists play a key role in our health system, providing access to health care support and advice for many members of our community," she said.

In Depth

Canada's unfilled health-care jobs doubled since pandemic began: StatCan

The number of empty health-care jobs in Canada has more than doubled and care providers are working more overtime and taking more sick leave since the COVID-19 pandemic began, according to Statistics Canada. A report, released last week, shows how nurses, personal support workers and care aides are now coping after struggling through the brunt of the pandemic to keep patients, and themselves, alive. [Global News explains](#).

Worth Repeating

"We have a very broad scope [of practice] already, is it everything we can do? Probably not, but there's so much within that scope we need to utilize . . . Renewals, immunizations, medication management, being initial prescribers, and sharing in that care—that's what we need to lean into to really make changes in the system and to open up capacity." —Allison Bodnar, the CEO of the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia, [says pharmacists want to do more](#) to support the province's strained primary health-care system

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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