



Canadian
Pharmacists
Association

Association des
pharmaciens
du Canada

The Weekly

Bringing the world of pharmacy together

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CPhA

Solu-Cortef shortages: Information for pharmacy professionals

Health Canada is currently managing a shortage of Solu-Cortef (hydrocortisone injection). Pfizer is the sole supplier of hydrocortisone injection on the Canadian market and is currently reporting shortages for all 4 strengths. Last week, it was deemed a Tier 3 shortage and it will be posted on the [Tier 3 drug shortages list](#). Tier 3 shortages are those that have the greatest potential impact on Canada's drug supply and health-care system. Check out our [resource page](#) for more information about the shortage for pharmacy professionals, including a [resource](#) developed in collaboration with medSask that provides guidance, conservation strategies and information related to use in adrenal insufficiency. The resources are also available in [French](#).

Survey: Understanding pharmacy practice needs and experiences

CPhA is looking to better understand the current landscape and future state of Canadian pharmacy practice, along with how to support pharmacists in providing optimal patient care. To that end, Abacus Data has been commissioned to conduct a survey of pharmacists across Canada focusing on digital solutions, pharmacists' expanded scope of practice, and the resources

and tools needed to support pharmacists in the care and treatment of patients. Please [take this 12-minute survey](#) by August 11 for the chance to win 1 of 2 cash prizes of \$100 each or the grand prize of \$300 (excluding residents of Quebec).

Provincial

SDM is testing a new type of clinic at 2 locations—with an eye to expand them across Ontario

It's got a receptionist's desk, a waiting area and a treatment room. No, it's not your local doctor's office or walk-in clinic. Nor is it, officially, a private medical clinic. Instead, it's a new "pharmacy care clinic" Shoppers Drug Mart (SDM) is rolling out this week to take advantage of expanded powers granted to Ontario pharmacists in January. "Pharmacists are ready to do more," SDM President Jeff Leger [told the *Hamilton Spectator*](#). Initially, there are 2 clinics being opened in SDM stores—1 in Burlington and another in Mississauga—with a third planned for later this year in Georgetown. But the company is looking at expanding the new layout to more of the 640 SDM locations in the province, and could potentially introduce some aspects to some of its 220 Loblaws-branded pharmacies. The clinics are a way, Leger said, to take the pressure off a health-care system that's bursting at the seams. Leger said pharmacy-based health care is a model that has worked well in other provinces such as Nova Scotia, where pharmacists have had the ability to diagnose and treat minor ailments—and some chronic conditions such as diabetes—for years.

Pilot project to offer management of certain chronic diseases at select NB pharmacies

Pharmacists at 6 locations across New Brunswick will soon have expanded authority to assess and prescribe for some chronic conditions as well as for strep throat as part of a 12-month pilot project [announced in a news release](#) on July 26. The Pharmacist Care Clinic will open at 2 locations on August 1 and at 4 additional locations by September 18. "Improving access to primary health care is a key part of the provincial health plan," said Health Minister Bruce Fitch. "This initiative is a step forward in helping patients access the care they need in a timely manner." The project is a collaboration between the New Brunswick College of Pharmacists and the Department of Health. The New

Brunswick Pharmacists' Association (NBPhA) welcomed the announcement, noting pharmacists are ready to deliver more accessible primary health care. "We know these Pharmacist Care Clinics will demonstrate the potential for pharmacy to be a much bigger part of the solution to our health-care crisis," said Anne Marie Picone, NBPhA's interim executive director.

Quebec lends \$30 million to Familiprix for technology updates

Quebec is lending \$30 million to Familiprix to automate its distribution centres and invest in its IT infrastructure, [the Montreal Gazette reports](#). The government assistance will support total investments estimated at \$76 million over a 5-year period. The pharmacy chain, which has 430 branches in Quebec and New Brunswick, says it will create 230 jobs. The company made the announcement on July 19 in Quebec City, in the presence of junior economy minister Christopher Skeete. "By increasing its drug distribution capacity, Familiprix will be able to remain competitive," Skeete said. Familiprix said the investments will speed up order processing and develop e-commerce.

National

Trudeau overhauls his cabinet, drops 7 ministers and shuffles most portfolios

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau [unveiled a new cabinet team](#) with a renewed focus on economic priorities during a ceremony at Rideau Hall on July 26. The shuffle brings in several new faces and tasks more than a dozen ministers with new roles. Among the changes related to health care, Mark Holland is the new minister of health, taking over from Jean-Yves Duclos, who becomes the minister of public services and procurement, while Ya'ara Saks replaces Carolyn Bennett as the minister of mental health and addictions and associate minister of health. François-Philippe Champagne retains his role as minister of innovation, science and industry and Chrystia Freeland remains deputy PM and minister of finance.

Canada's 988 mental health crisis hotline launching Nov. 30

In a step toward prioritizing mental health support, Canada is launching its nationwide mental health crisis hotline, 988, on November 30, providing a free texting or calling service for Canadians struggling with mental health challenges, [Global News reports](#). On July 24, Carolyn Bennett, mental health and addictions minister at the time, announced that the federal government will be investing \$156 million over 3 years to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health for the 988 helpline, which was first announced last summer. “Every day, an average of 12 people die by suicide in Canada,” Bennett said in a media release. “Today’s investments take us one step closer to launching the 9-8-8 Suicide Crisis Helpline, which will provide an immediate, confidential, and judgement-free suicide prevention support for Canadians in need—when they need it most.” On November 30, the hotline will be available to all Canadians in English and French, 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. It will offer trauma-informed and culturally appropriate services by trained crisis responders by phone or text.

Top medical experts call for national inquiry into Canada’s COVID-19 ‘failures’

Three and a half years after the virus behind COVID-19 began its rampage around the world—eventually killing tens of thousands of Canadians—a group of top medical experts is calling on federal officials to launch a full national inquiry into Canada’s pandemic response, [CBC reports](#). In a sweeping set of editorials and analysis papers [published on July 24 in the BMJ](#), more than a dozen physicians and health advocates are shining a spotlight on what they’ve dubbed the country’s “major pandemic failures,” from the devastation in long-term care homes, to vaccine hoarding, to higher death rates among lower-income communities. Those shortcomings all played out against the backdrop of the country’s complex, fragmented health-care system. That decentralized approach, the authors argue, led to dramatic differences in how each province handled the spread of SARS-CoV-2, the virus first reported in Canada in January 2020.

‘Highly resistant’ gonorrhea on the rise in Canada, other countries: WHO

Several countries, including Canada, are seeing a spike in cases of gonorrhea that are “highly resistant” to existing treatments, [CTV News reports](#). The World Health Organization (WHO) shared the warning in a news release on July 24 regarding its latest guidelines for testing for and diagnosing sexually

transmitted infections (STIs). According to the organization, the COVID-19 pandemic caused disruptions to prevention, testing and treatment services for STIs in many countries, leaving them battling a new resurgence of these infections now—and the spectre of antimicrobial resistance is making these infections harder to kick than ever. “Of concern, the spread of a *Neisseria [gonorrhoeae]* clone that is highly resistant to ceftriaxone is increasingly being reported in countries in Asia such as China, Japan, Singapore and Vietnam as well as in Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, France, Ireland and the United Kingdom,” the release stated.

International

US: FTC walks back years of support for PBMs

The US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) voted unanimously on July 20 to issue a statement withdrawing comments made over a 13-year period opposing state legislation that would boost transparency over the entities that manage prescription drug benefits, [Bloomberg Law reports](#). The vote from the 3 Democrats on the FTC, which has 2 Republican seats vacant, officially pulls back 11 letters and reports the agency issued between 2004 and 2017 warning against state legislation that would have required pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) to disclose certain information about their business practices and finances to state governments. PBMs manage drug coverage on behalf of health plans, employers and others. The commissioners said the vote is part of an effort to update the agency’s understanding of PBMs as it carries out a sweeping investigation into the industry to determine whether any PBM practices are anticompetitive and restrict patient access to affordable medicines.

Ireland: Pharmacists will be able to prescribe medications in bid to cut GP demand

Irish pharmacists will be able to prescribe medicines for common minor ailments in a bid to cut down on demand on general practitioners (GPs) and hospitals, [the Irish Independent reports](#). Health Minister Stephen Donnelly said the move will make it easier and faster for patients to get the medications they need. He has set up an expert taskforce to support the expansion of pharmacists’ roles. “Empowering pharmacists to use their expertise to assess

and treat certain ailments will help patients get the care they need sooner and closer to home—but the benefits go much further. It can help reduce demand on hospitals, walk-in clinics and GP practices,” Donnelly said. The Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU) welcomed the announcement, saying it “could deliver a revolution in community care.” However, the IPU warned that the level of fees paid to pharmacists will have to be increased.

Australia: Nationally consistent free flu shot campaign required, Guild says

The Pharmacy Guild of Australia is urging Australian premiers and chief ministers to take steps to boost the uptake of influenza vaccinations amid surging case numbers, [the Australian Journal of Pharmacy reports](#) (subscription access only). Inconsistent approaches to funding flu vaccinations from state and territory governments is hindering the uptake of the annual shot, according to Trent Twomey, the guild’s national president. “Unfortunately, we saw the removal of the free influenza program that we had last year, so we’ve seen 2 million less vaccinations administered this year . . . than we did last year, which is why we’re seeing this rise in cases,” he said. Twomey noted that Western Australia was the only jurisdiction to offer free flu vaccinations to people not covered by the National Immunization Program, with “Queensland playing catch-up” with its free flu shot campaign launched in response to the recent surge in case numbers.

In Depth

‘Sad sign of the times’: Ontario forced to develop a protocol for hospital emergency department closures

Hospital emergency closures have become so commonplace in Ontario that the provincial government has had to create a protocol with checklists for steps that hospitals should follow before temporarily closing their emergency departments. Emergency department closures were rare in Ontario before last summer, when there were numerous short- and longer-term temporary closures, mainly in rural hospitals. Since then, the situation has accelerated and is broadly described as a crisis in rural and remote parts of the province. [The Ottawa Citizen explains](#).

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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