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Canadian
Pharmacists
Association

Association des
pharmaciens
du Canada

The Weekly

Bringing the world of pharmacy together

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CPhA

IPPC announces inaugural scholarship recipients

The Indigenous Pharmacy Professionals of Canada (IPPC), in partnership with CPhA, is thrilled to announce the inaugural recipients of the IPPC Indigenous Pharmacy Scholarship: Makenzie Karpounin, Sasha Merasty, Amy Bell and Jessica Fortier. These scholarships, each awarded to a pharmacy student with First Nations (status or non-status), Métis or Inuit ancestry enrolled in a PharmD or pharmacy technician program in Canada, aim to encourage and support the growth of the Indigenous pharmacy community across the country. This year's recipients were selected from more than 40 inspiring applicants, all dedicated to enhancing care for and by Indigenous peoples within and beyond their own communities. "The level of interest in this scholarship speaks directly to the need for increased funding for Indigenous students interested in pursuing a pharmacy degree," IPPC CEO Amy Lamb said in a news release. [Learn more about the scholarship and the 2023/24 recipients.](#)

Reminder: CPhA's strategic plan survey closes September 7

Please help us shape the priorities and goals that will define our path forward. Your input in our strategic planning survey will help us ensure that the work we do is relevant and that our priorities reflect the diverse pharmacy community in Canada. Together, we can chart a course that supports our shared goals and drives positive change within our profession. The survey closes tomorrow, September 7, at 11:59 pm ET. Thank you in advance for your time, dedication and commitment to our organization. [Take the survey](#).

New patient resource: Medication emergency preparedness

Natural disasters pose unique challenges to the practice of pharmacy, as they can disrupt essential health-care services and access to medications. During such events, pharmacists play a crucial role in ensuring the continuity of patient care. CPhA has developed a new patient resource to help pharmacists discuss emergency preparedness with their patients. Including a medication checklist, grab & go medication bag content list and a table to track current medications, these resources—available in [English](#) and [French](#)—can help your patients prepare for an emergency before it happens!

Webinar recording available: Navigating drug shortages in Canadian health care

Drug shortages are an ongoing concern in the Canadian health-care system, affecting 1 in 4 Canadians. Dealing with shortages on the front line is time consuming for pharmacists and pharmacy teams, who must manage inventories and problem-solve with patients. In the most recent Practice Development webinar, you'll hear from 3 experts who each bring different perspectives and experiences to answer important questions about drug shortages in Canada. [Watch or listen to a recording](#) of this insightful discussion.

CPhA responds to anticipated shortage of Ozempic in Canada

A shortage of diabetes drug Ozempic that is used off-label for weight loss is expected in Canada until early October, manufacturer Novo Nordisk and Health Canada announced on August 18. Only the 1 mg injection pen is affected by the shortage. The lower-dose Ozempic injection pens of 0.25 mg and 0.5 mg remain available and “may be an option for some patients” as an alternative, according to Health Canada. But swapping in multiple lower doses

to replace the 1 mg dose is not likely to address the need, Barry Power, CPhA's acting chief pharmacist officer, [told the Canadian Press](#). People with diabetes usually start taking Ozempic at a 0.25 mg or 0.5 mg dose before moving up to 1 mg, which is the maintenance dose, he said. "So, it may be a stopgap for a few people," Power said. For patients who require refills, pharmacists will likely "only fill a 1-month supply at any given time over the next little while until the supply is replenished at the global level," he added.

Pharmacy on the front lines

BC pharmacies limit Ozempic refills during worldwide shortage

A year ago, most patients who came to Nika Maghsoud's North Vancouver pharmacy with a prescription for Ozempic had Type 2 diabetes, which the drug is Health Canada approved to treat. But now, diabetics aren't the only ones taking Ozempic. "In the past 6 to 7 months I would say I'm seeing a lot of off-label use, a lot of obesity use," Maghsoud, a registered pharmacist at the Pharmasave on Marine Drive, [told CTV News](#). "The interest has exploded. I see so much more demand in my day-to-day practice for sure." The worldwide demand for Ozempic as a weight loss drug has the manufacturer warning of a shortage of the most popular 1 mg dose pen through early October. "I really urge patients to call their pharmacies ahead of time," Maghsoud said. "Give us some notice so that we can provide it in a timely manner, know our demand, and distribute it equally."

Want to counsel patients in any language? You can—and soon you probably will

Lindsay Dixon was playing around in ChatGPT—the popular artificial intelligence (AI) technology that uses natural language processing to enable human-like conversations—when a question came to mind: What can we do with this in pharmacy? That line of thinking led Dixon—a Victoria, BC, pharmacist who founded digital media platforms Friendly Pharmacy5 and CreateRX—to develop AI Pharmacy Counsellor, an AI-driven tool that can create medication and health counselling videos using a particular pharmacist's image and voice. Once launched, AI Pharmacy Counsellor can be used to provide important clinical and health information in virtually any language. "As pharmacists, we're required to counsel all patients on new

medications and sometimes it's hard to tell how much they're really absorbing and when they leave, you might be wondering if they understood enough and if they're even going to take the medication," Dixon [told Canadian Healthcare Network](#) (subscription access only). "And it's not always a question of comprehending medical information. We live in a multicultural society so in some cases it's a question of language."

Provincial

BC pharmacies running out of COVID-19 tests, but province says they will be available for fall

Saanichton, BC, pharmacist Lily McWilliams [told the Times Colonist](#) that patients at Cridge Family Pharmacy on Keating Cross Road ask daily for free COVID-19 rapid antigen tests, but she has run out and a new supply from the province has yet to arrive. The federal government ended the provincial test distribution on December 31, 2022, according to BC's Health Ministry, but the province says tests will continue to be available for free at community pharmacies as throughout the upcoming respiratory illness season. Pharmacy distributors have been supplied with newer product to replace any expired product and any pharmacies with no or low supply can contact their distributor for more, the Ministry of Health said. BC Pharmacy Association spokesperson Michael Mui said the association has been seeing consistent numbers of test kits being distributed to pharmacies over the past 5 weeks.

Demand for rapid COVID-19 tests has been low at QC pharmacies: AQPP

As the fall approaches, some experts say it might be a good idea to know how to get your hands on a COVID-19 test if you need one, [CBC reports](#). In Quebec, rapid tests are available free of charge to anyone who wants one at the province's various vaccination and screening centres. Some pharmacies also offer free tests but these are reserved for vulnerable and at-risk members of the population, people covered by Quebec's public drug plan, youth aged 14 to 17 and full-time students up to the age of 25. Members of the general public can still purchase tests at certain pharmacies for a price ranging between \$6 and \$10 per test. A box usually contains at least 2 tests. However, not many pharmacies sell the tests because demand for them has been low, according

to Benoit Morin, the president of the Association québécoise des pharmaciens propriétaires (AQPP), which represents pharmacist-owners in Quebec.

National

New health minister says pharmacare legislation is coming this fall

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's new health minister says legislation to implement a universal pharmacare program will be tabled this fall, [CBC reports](#). Passing legislation to establish a national universal pharmacare program by the end of the year is a condition of the House of Commons supply-and-confidence agreement between the Liberals and the NDP. To meet that deadline, the government's legislation will need to pass through the House of Commons and the Senate and undergo 2 committee studies before Parliament breaks in December. Health Minister Mark Holland, who took on the portfolio in last month's cabinet shuffle, told reporters that conversations are ongoing but he plans to table a bill when the House of Commons returns. Holland's predecessor, Jean-Yves Duclos, had warned that pharmacare legislation might not pass by the end of the year.

Government signs new deal on generic drug pricing with pharmaceutical industry

Government negotiators have reached a deal with the country's pharmaceutical industry on pricing for generic drugs, which fill three-quarters of all prescriptions in Canada, [the Globe and Mail reports](#). The pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance, which represents provincial and federal health insurance plans, made the announcement on August 22, along with the Canadian Generic Pharmaceutical Association, which represents makers of off-patent drugs. The deal sets pricing for generic drugs based on a percentage of the list price for the patented version of the medicine. These prices are also used by private insurers. It is the third such agreement, following earlier pricing deals in 2014 and 2018, and runs 3 years, with an optional extension of 2 more. The biggest change in the latest deal is that generic drugs that are only made by a single company will now be priced at 55% of the patented price. Previously, the drug maker could charge 75 or 85% of the patented price.

Canada considering stopgap plan to prevent baby formula shortages: documents

The federal government is looking for ways to bring more infant formula products to Canada while it overhauls regulations to prevent future shortages, an internal memo shows. Many parents still struggle to find the right formula for their babies at a reasonable price, after last year's temporary shutdown of a US-based manufacturing plant caused a major shortage of shipments to Canada, [the Canadian Press reports](#). The bare shelves illustrated just how fragile Canada's supply chain is when it comes to vital infant formula, which Canada does not produce domestically. The government is expected to reveal its long-term plans to deal with the problem this fall as part of an overhaul of outdated rules that govern how Canada approves infant formula products. Those changes could take years, though, so the government is considering a stopgap that would see the health minister exempt products from certain requirements.

New guidance on using take-home naloxone for in-community overdose response

New guidance from the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* outlines 3 key recommendations for the distribution of take-home naloxone kits and use by community overdose responders in Canada, [Canadian Healthcare Network reports](#) (subscription access only). The guidance is designed to inform policy makers on best practices around implementing distribution campaigns for these health-care tools, [according to a news release from the journal](#). The 3 recommendations are as follows: take-home naloxone campaigns should offer both intramuscular and intranasal formulations; the kits should feature an easy-to-recognize case with non-latex gloves, a breathing mask, the naloxone itself and the relevant supplies to administer it, and instructions on how to do so; and trained responders should also call emergency services and give CPR, in addition to administering naloxone, if need be.

International

US: Walmart cuts pharmacist pay, hours while workload piles up

Walmart is asking some of its 16 000 pharmacists across the US to voluntarily take pay cuts by reducing their working hours in a bid to lower costs, a person familiar with the matter [told Reuters](#). The cuts, which haven't been previously reported and are aimed at pharmacists in higher wage brackets, highlight the new pressures at Walmart pharmacies. Walmart also has agreed to pay US\$3.1 billion (the equivalent of CAD\$4.2 billion) as its share of an opioid-related legal settlement, which is adding to its legal costs this year. Walmart confirmed to Reuters that it was reducing the number of hours it was offering some pharmacists, citing a drop off in demand for drugs during the summer and requests from pharmacists for a better work-life balance. Michael Hogue, CEO of the American Pharmacists Association, said there is no data to support the assertion that demand for medications falls during the summer and that pharmacists need fewer hours to fill prescriptions.

In Depth

'Triple-demic': Health experts concerned over possible fall surge of COVID-19, flu and RSV

As many experts urge a return to stronger masking measures in hospitals and medical sites, there are growing signs that the flu virus will be tougher than usual this year, especially for children. With COVID-19 cases beginning to rise again after a lull, some are predicting another "triple-demic" this fall, with hospitals treating patients for COVID-19, flu and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). [The Ottawa Citizen explains](#).

Worth Repeating

"Dominique [Jordan] was a leader of our profession at a local, national and international level for many years. His commitment to pharmacy was never more evident than during the COVID-19 pandemic when he championed an expanded hands-on role of pharmacists when many primary health-care professionals went to virtual models . . . Dominique was a passionate pharmacist, a strong, considered leader and a good friend to all." —Paul Sinclair, the president-elect of the International Pharmaceutical Federation

(FIP), [pays tribute to FIP president Dominique Jordan](#), who died on August 17 after a period of illness

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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