



Canadian  
Pharmacists  
Association

Association des  
pharmaciens  
du Canada

# The Weekly

Bringing the world of pharmacy together

## August 9, 2023

### CPHA

#### ***CPHA outlines 5 areas to strengthen health care in pre-budget submission***

Last week, CPhA submitted [a series of recommendations](#) to the Standing Committee on Finance as part of its consultation for the 2024 federal budget. The submission focused on 5 areas for health care investment and improvement, including enhancing health human resources strategies both federally and provincially, expanding rural and remote student loan forgiveness to pharmacists, implementing a mixed payer pharmacare program, making the Sexual and Reproductive Health Fund permanent, and funding tools and monitoring programs through CPhA to prevent and mitigate drug shortages.

#### ***CPHA highlights key drug shortages recommendations in federal consultation***

The federal government is currently conducting a [consultation](#) on improving access to drugs and other health products in Canada. As part of our ongoing advocacy and engagement on drug shortages, last week CPhA issued a [submission](#) focused on a number of areas and suggestions from our [federal drug shortages recommendations](#). These include encouraging a robust

pharmaceutical market in Canada, supporting manufacturers during shortages, creating and maintaining a list of medications at high-risk of shortages, enhancing data collection, equipping pharmacists with the tools and authority to manage shortages, reviewing Health Canada's drug shortage mandate, and providing financial assistance to patients who face higher out-of-pocket costs during shortages.

***Last chance: Take our survey on 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).

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## Provincial

***Free consultations, expanded scope filling gaps in primary care, PEI pharmacists say***

Ten months after launching, PEI pharmacists say a provincial program funding consultations for common ailments at pharmacies is easing pressure on the Island's health-care system, [CBC reports](#). The province has been covering \$25 consultations on more than 35 common ailments within pharmacists' scope of practice—from urinary tract infections to skin conditions to allergies—through the Pharmacy Plus program since October. Health Department officials said in an email to CBC News that 31 000 patients have received 46 000 assessments through the program. "We're getting incredible feedback from both the public and the pharmacists who are participating in the program," said Erin MacKenzie, executive director of the PEI Pharmacists Association. "People I think right across the country are watching PEI—at least in the

pharmacy world—and they're very intrigued by how we've expanded our offerings through this program."

### ***'A great step forward': PEI pharmacists can now prescribe birth control***

In July, PEI became the eighth province in the country to allow pharmacists to prescribe birth control, [SaltWire reports](#). It's a move clinicians believe will increase access to contraception for women and ease some of the strain on the province's doctors. PEI pharmacists can now conduct assessments and prescribe hormonal contraception as part of the province's Pharmacy Plus program. Pharmacists could already prescribe refills for hormonal contraception. As such, patients will no longer need to see a physician or nurse practitioner to obtain an initial prescription for birth control. Erin MacKenzie, executive director of the PEI Pharmacists Association, said the demand for these prescriptions has so far been modest. "The word is slowly getting out," she said. "I would expect that, as it becomes more broadly known that pharmacists can do this and provide this service as well, that we're going to start to see an increased uptake."

### ***Why pharmacists in NS want an even wider scope to help ease health-care strain***

Pharmacists say there's still more work they can do to help ease pressures on Nova Scotia's health-care system, [Global News reports](#). They want to see the full scope of their practice recognized but say they also need to solve a recruitment problem. The Nova Scotia College of Pharmacists said doctors should provide a diagnosis and pharmacists should take over prescribing and managing prescriptions. "Pharmacists offering drug therapy I believe will result in patients probably being prescribed fewer medications," CEO Beverley Zwicker said at a health committee meeting in Halifax on August 8, joined by Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia CEO Allison Bodnar. Pointing to the recent success of the pharmacy primary care clinic project that allows pharmacists to prescribe for minor ailments, Bodnar said a shift in workload would help ease the strain on physicians and emergency rooms and prevent delays in treatment. "We know it's improving access to care—41 000 services in the first 6 months of the project," Bodnar said.

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## National

### ***Health Canada approves first RSV vaccine for people 60 and older***

Health Canada has approved the first vaccine for respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) for adults aged 60 and over, but it may only be available in “limited” quantities for this fall’s respiratory virus season, [CBC reports](#). Health Canada approved manufacturer GSK’s new vaccine called Arexvy on August 4. In an email to CBC News, the federal health body confirmed it anticipates a limited supply of the vaccine will be available for the upcoming RSV season. This news comes after the US Food and Drug Administration approved the vaccine in May. Doctors have long been calling for an RSV vaccine for seniors because although the virus is common, people who are older are more likely to become severely ill and need hospitalization.

### ***Emerging EG.5 COVID-19 variant expected to spread to Canada soon***

A new variant of COVID-19 has emerged and is quickly spreading across the globe, with cases expected to pop up in Canada soon, [CHCH reports](#). The World Health Organization (WHO) said the new variant, EG.5, is closely related to the Omicron variant. Tracking the spread of the variant in Canada will predominantly come in the form of wastewater testing and hospital reports, as fewer people are testing regularly, according to health officials. EG.5, like all previous variants, is expected to disproportionately impact vulnerable populations, including the elderly and those with pre-existing health conditions. WHO first began tracking EG.5 on July 19 and has reported cases in the United Kingdom, United States and across Asia.

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## International

### ***Belgium: Pharmacists to administer flu vaccine this autumn***

Belgian pharmacists will be able to administer the flu vaccine this autumn, the office of Health Minister Frank Vandenbroucke announced on August 4. The aim will be to increase vaccination coverage for influenza which is still too low in Belgium, particularly for certain at-risk groups, [the Brussels Times reports](#). In the winter of 2022, pharmacists were involved in the COVID-19 vaccination

campaign and could also administer flu shots. From October 1 to December 31 of this year, Belgians can be vaccinated against influenza as well as COVID-19 at pharmacies that are equipped and have undergone training for this purpose. “In 11 European countries around us, including France and Germany, vaccination against influenza by pharmacists has been authorised for a long time,” Vandenbroucke said. “We find that vaccination coverage is higher in these countries, precisely because pharmacists have a lot of contact with the population.”

### ***Australia: Pharmacy Guild welcomes pharmacist prescribing in Victoria, WA***

On August 3, the Pharmacy Guild of Australia welcomed new legislation in Victoria that enables a community pharmacist prescribing pilot. Under the pilot, due to begin in October, community pharmacists will be able to reissue repeat prescriptions of oral contraceptives, treat minor skin conditions and provide antibiotics for the treatment of uncomplicated urinary tract infections (UTIs). “Pharmacists are highly skilled and qualified medicines experts, who already assess, diagnose and treat common conditions every day,” Anthony Tassone, the guild’s Victorian branch president, said [in a news release](#). Victoria’s pharmacist prescribing pilot follows Queensland’s now permanent UTI pharmacy prescribing service and a trial in New South Wales, which began in May. In Western Australia, pharmacist prescribing for uncomplicated UTIs will soon be a core service, [according to an August 4 announcement](#) welcomed by the guild’s WA branch.

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## **In Depth**

### ***Air pollution may contribute to rising threat of antimicrobial resistance, study finds***

Antibiotic resistance is on the rise around the world, and there may be a surprising reason why: air pollution. In a [study published on August 7 in the \*Lancet Planetary Health\*](#), scientists found a connection between these 2 seemingly different phenomena. [CNN explains](#).

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## Worth Repeating

“Western knowledge systems predominate what is taught and practised in the profession of pharmacy, and so stronger attention must be paid to the unique tensions experienced when weaving in Indigenous knowledges and worldview into Western pharmacy education and practice.” —Jaris Swidrovich, the founder and chair of Indigenous Pharmacy Professionals of Canada, writes about the tensions between Western and Indigenous worldviews in pharmacy [in the second part of an article series in the \*Canadian Pharmacists Journal\*](#), which was published ahead of International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples on August 9

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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.

Canadian Pharmacists Association  
851 Industrial Avenue, Mailbox M035  
Ottawa, ON K1G 4L3  
[Contact Us](#)