



Canadian
Pharmacists
Association
Association des
pharmaciens
du Canada

The Weekly

Bringing the world of pharmacy together

While COVID-19 continues to be our primary focus for The Weekly, we're expanding the content to include other topics of interest, ensuring that we're bringing you the latest and most relevant pharmacy news each week.

June 23, 2021

NOTE: The Weekly will not be published next Wednesday, June 30.

CPhA

CDSA exemptions extended to 2026; CPhA advocates for recognition of pharmacists as practitioners

CPhA was pleased to receive the news that exemptions made to the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (CDSA) last March have been [extended to 2026 \(en français\)](#). The exemptions have allowed pharmacists to respond to the needs of their patients, providing continuity of care to support them at a time when care was becoming increasingly fragmented by the pandemic. CPhA has been actively advocating for these exemptions to be extended and made permanent through an extensive federal outreach campaign. Over the last few months, we have met with over 25 federal officials, matching front-line pharmacists with their MPs to share how their experiences supported their practice throughout the pandemic. While we believe that these exemptions recognize the vital role of pharmacists in opioid management, we continue to advocate for further federal regulatory changes to enable pharmacists to practice to full scope, notably by adding pharmacists as practitioners under the CDSA.

Updated chart: Pharmacy involvement in COVID-19 vaccination

As COVID-19 vaccination rollouts continue, CPhA is making bi-weekly updates to our Pharmacy Involvement in COVID Vaccination map, staying on top of the role pharmacists are playing in the vaccination effort. The graphic is available in [English](#) and [French](#).

CPhA's COVID-19 web pages are being updated regularly at www.pharmacists.ca/covid19 and www.pharmacists.ca/covid19fr.

Pharmacy on the front line

With clock ticking, pharmacists come to the rescue after 1-year-old eats raccoon feces

A southern Alberta couple who realized their infant had eaten raccoon feces found themselves racing against time to find a rare medication — and doctors and pharmacists across Western Canada mobilized to help them find it, [reports CBC](#). When Lethbridge pharmacist Bryce Barry got the call that the family was looking for albendazole and why, he immediately understood the dire predicament. “I’ve got young kids, and I couldn’t imagine being in that situation,” said Barry, who works at Shoppers Drug Mart. But when he checked his suppliers, Barry realized he couldn’t bring the medication into his pharmacy. And when he discovered it’s not commercially available in Canada, he started contacting his network to find a solution.

Provincial

BC pharmacies seeing cancelled vaccine appointments after new AstraZeneca guidance

Some people are cancelling their appointments at BC pharmacies after new guidance was issued for the AstraZeneca vaccine, [according to CTV](#). Azmina Jiwa, owner of Bonsor Pharmacy in Burnaby says that some people have cancelled their second-dose appointments and that a few are undecided. That’s something also being seen at London Drugs. “We did have some people cancel their appointment, but not a significant number,” said Chris Chiew, general manager of pharmacy for London Drugs. The cancellations come after the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) changed its guidance on June 17, [now recommending](#) that people who received a first dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine receive a second dose of an mRNA vaccine, such as Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna.

Various factors determine differences in vaccination uptake: pharmacist

While Alberta may have surpassed a threshold with 70% of eligible residents having received 1 dose of COVID-19 vaccine, vaccination coverage varies dramatically across the province, [reports Global News](#). Tony Nickonchuk, a pharmacist based in Peace River, who has been analyzing vaccination trends, points to several factors that can determine higher vaccination uptake, such as level of education acquired and geography. “[Peace River is] a massive geographic area. There are no pharmacies doing any COVID vaccines north of Manning. There’s a huge access issue in some of those areas as well. Generally, when you look at it, the areas that are really sparsely populated definitely have lower uptake,” he said. Nickonchuk also points to historical trends. “There are communities in the [High Level] area that are well known to have

very low immunization rates, even among non-COVID immunizations, [such as] standard routine infant immunizations,” he said. Other obstacles can range from concerns about vaccine safety to the sentiment that COVID-19 is not a problem.

University of Waterloo guide helps people unsure about second vaccine dose after AstraZeneca

People who got AstraZeneca for their first dose and are now unsure what COVID-19 vaccine to get for the second can turn to a decision guide created by the University of Waterloo, [according to the Record](#). Changing recommendations have left many uncertain about what is the right choice and worried they could make the wrong one. “It can be really hard to navigate,” said professor and pharmacist Kelly Grindrod, who is the pharmacy lead for Waterloo Region’s vaccine distribution task force. “I think uncertainty is a hard place for a lot of people.” The aim of the decision guide — a team effort by doctors, pharmacists, scientists and patients — is to reduce decision regret by giving people all the information.

New pharmacy school at uOttawa should be ready to accept students by 2023

A new school of pharmacy at the University of Ottawa will be ready to start accepting its first students in September 2023, [says the Ottawa Citizen](#). The university has been working toward opening a French-language pharmacy program for years, and although there are still a few hurdles to clear, the project has reached the point where the university is confident it will go ahead. It would become the only French-language pharmacy program outside Quebec. Dr. Manon Denis-LeBlanc, vice-dean of francophone affairs at uOttawa, said the pandemic, among other things, has brought home the importance of pharmacists to health care at a time when the system is under continued strain. And pharmacy has changed in the past decade. While pharmacists might once have spent more time behind the scenes, they are now more likely to be interacting directly with customers for a variety of reasons. That makes language an issue, she said.

PharmaPride aims to make faculty a safe space for all

[PharmaPride](#), the student group for LGBTQ+ individuals and allies at the Leslie Dan Faculty of Pharmacy at the University of Toronto, hopes to make its mark through allyship and education. Adrian de Boer, co-president of the group, says that one thing that they really wanted was to create a safe space at the faculty for LGBTQ+ individuals and allies to join and forge some friendships, and to organize events for LGBTQ+ individuals. “We also educate on being a better ally and increase awareness of how to do that, whether it be in pharmacy practice or personal life. As pharmacists, every one of us is going to come into contact with LGBTQ+ patients. We need to understand the appropriate terminology and how to be inclusive, and it may take a little more finesse, a different type of care, or a different type of knowledge to make these patients feel comfortable,” he says. Al-amin Ahamed, co-president, adds “It is also important to note the long history of discrimination and inequity faced by these communities and how that is a barrier to addressing their hesitancy in receiving care now. Pharmacists play a vital role in building trust and rapport, which makes their job crucial in supporting these communities. That’s where

PharmaPride comes in — we're helping students and faculty become more aware and comfortable with addressing these topics."

National

Vaccine hesitancy continues to decline

New [Abacus Data research](#) reveals that the number of vaccine-hesitant Canadians has continued to decline, and now numbers 13%, with another 6% indicating they will never take a COVID-19 vaccine. Among those who have already had a first shot of the vaccine, 98% say they have either had their second shot already or intend to get it as soon as possible. Just 2% say they might not bother with the second shot. While these numbers suggest Canada can expect continued forward momentum in vaccine acceptance, one other question highlights the need to continue to provide education and encouragement about the second shot and its role in health protection from this virus. Although 74% believe the second shot is "essential" to provide protection from COVID, 15% say it's a good idea to get the second shot, but not essential, and 11% say they believe the first dose provides sufficient protection from their standpoint. Young people, in particular, seem less convinced about the need for the second shot.

Cystic fibrosis life-altering drug nearing patient access across the country

Health Canada announced that the cystic fibrosis (CF) drug Trikafta is now available to be prescribed by doctors across Canada, [according to Global News](#). At this point, the drug would be available to those aged 12 and over and patients who have at a minimum 1 of the CF F508del gene mutations. Health Canada says for those under the age of 12, progression and research continue for the approval of the younger CF patients. According to the Cystic Fibrosis Canada website, Trikafta could, over the span of time, reduce the number of people living with severe lung disease by 60% and the number of deaths by 15%. It could also add years of life to those with CF. For example, a child born with the disease could see a decade added to their lives.

Health Canada proposes ban on most vaping flavours it says appeal to youth

The federal government says it wants to ban most flavoured vaping products in a bid to reduce their appeal to youth, [reports CTV](#). Health Canada put forward draft regulations on June 18 that would restrict all e-cigarette flavours except tobacco, mint and menthol. The department said that the proposed changes would make vaping less enticing to youth, while still providing options for smokers looking to switch to an alternative source of nicotine. "Vaping is putting a new generation of Canadians at risk of nicotine addiction," Health Minister Patty Hajdu said in a statement. "These new measures build on our efforts to stop young Canadians from vaping."

To build a strong and sustainable life-sciences sector, we need to "start with a stop": IMC

Innovative Medicines Canada (IMC) is [urging the federal government](#) to stop the implementation of the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board's regulatory changes, which are scheduled to take effect July 1. In an [op-ed in iPolitics](#), IMC said that these changes will have unfortunate consequences that will put Canada and Canadians at a disadvantage. Reducing certain drug

prices by 40 to 90% will further disincentivize businesses to introduce new products to, or make investments in, Canada's market. Driving business away from Canada also means fewer clinical trials, less homegrown R&D — and, most important, less access by Canadians to the newest medicines. As things stand now, the article notes, Canadians have access to only 48% of all new medicines available globally.

International

US: Walmart offering digital COVID-19 vaccine record

Walmart is empowering people with increased access to their health data through a free, secure digital wallet, starting with the COVID-19 vaccine immunization record, [reports Drug Store News](#). Individuals will be able to store their COVID-19 vaccine record, which can be printed or saved onto a device, in their pharmacy account on Walmart.com or Samsclub.com. The digital vaccine record being offered by the retailer is a free version of the physical card issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and includes the individual's name, date of birth, date of vaccination, vaccine manufacturer, vaccine lot number and location where the immunization was received.

Ireland: Vaccine rollout gets underway

About 1300 pharmacists across Ireland began administering COVID vaccine shots last week, the majority of which will be the single-dose Johnson & Johnson, [according to the Irish Times](#). People over the age of 50 can book an appointment with a participating pharmacist to receive the vaccine. In a couple of weeks, approximately 350 rural pharmacies will have the Pfizer vaccine, which will be administered at the same as the national program at vaccination centres and physicians' offices. Dunville community pharmacy owner Niamh Boden is "happy to be part of the program." However, she says pharmacists have been given "an almost impossible task" in finding enough people over the age of 50 to fill their slots. "The fact we're only able to vaccinate over 50s means I don't know if I'll be able to use my full supply. I'm doing my best and putting in a lot of personal effort in reaching out to community groups and sports teams," she says.

UK: More than 650 sign-ups to RPS Inclusion and Wellbeing Pledge in its first week

Since its launch on June 9, the [Inclusion and Wellbeing Pledge](#) from the Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS) has been signed by more than 650 organizations and individuals. Organizations and individuals — including pharmacists, technicians and pharmacy support staff — are invited to sign the pledge to demonstrate a "public commitment to 'be inclusive, celebrate diversity, create a culture of belonging and support pharmacy teams' health and wellbeing.'" The pledge is part of the society's 5-year [Inclusion and Diversity Strategy](#), published in June 2020. Boots, the UK's biggest pharmacy chain, has signed the pledge, and Marc Donovan, chief pharmacist at Boots, says this is just the start. "We need to make commitments and actions. It's an iterative process, where it builds on many of the things that we currently do. It builds on our mental health first aid training approach, our mental health awareness approach; it builds on the focus that we have on health inequality."

In-depth

‘Immense challenge’: Trying to save the lives of BC drug users

Drug users continue to fatally overdose in record numbers in BC, due to a poisoned street supply and pandemic restrictions. There are differing opinions on how to save their lives, as examined in this [Postmedia feature](#).

Worth repeating

“This is not rational behaviour: All the vaccines approved for use in Canada are safe and effective. But it’s very human. Branding often comes down to trust, and trust is critical when it comes to people’s health. If anything, public-health officials have failed to instill trust in all of Canada’s approved vaccines.” — A [Globe and Mail editorial](#) looks at one of the “weirder phenomena” of the pandemic: the branding of COVID-19 vaccines.

This weekly COVID-19 update is compiled by the Canadian Pharmacists Association. Please note that this publication is meant to inform and is not a comprehensive list of information available. Be sure to check with your provincial regulatory authority or advocacy association for province-specific information. While we aim to ensure all information contained in this update is accurate, the situation is evolving rapidly and CPhA does not take responsibility for the content provided by other organizations and sources.

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