Federal government unveils proposals to provide “red tape relief” to pharmacies

Regulatory changes designed to provide “red tape relief” will save Canadian pharmacies an estimated \$8.7 million a year in administrative costs, according to the federal government.

The government announced proposed changes to the *Food and Drug Regulations* on January 21, 2013, as part of its larger initiative for small business, the Red Tape Reduction Action Plan, announced in October 2012. The new rules would allow provincially regulated pharmacy technicians to transfer prescriptions to another pharmacy and to complete the related paperwork—tasks currently restricted to pharmacists.

The changes are to take effect this year in Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia—where

pharmacy technicians are regulated—and will apply in other provinces when they implement regulation of their technicians.

“This amendment... will enable pharmacists to focus more of their time on direct patient care,” said Dennis Darby, CEO of the Ontario Pharmacists’ Association, in a federal news release. “As key members of the pharmacy team, pharmacy technicians need to be able to practise to their full scope so that pharmacists can provide the best, most efficient health care to patients.”

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US court sentences Canadian Internet pharmacy pioneer to 4 years in prison

One of the first Canadian operators of a cross-border Internet pharmacy has been sentenced to 4 years in prison for fraud, the US Department of Justice announced in a news release on January 9, 2013.

Andrew Strempler was also ordered to pay a forfeiture of \$300,000 from business proceeds and a fine of \$25,000, after pleading guilty to conspiracy to commit mail fraud in October 2012.

Mr. Strempler is the former owner and president of Mediplan Health Consulting Inc., also known as RxNorth.com. Launched from Minnedosa, Manitoba, the Internet, telephone and mail-order pharmacy sold prescription drugs to consumers in the United States in 2005 and 2006.

In the release, the Justice Department says that Strempler and others “unlawfully enriched themselves” by falsely claiming that RxNorth was selling safe prescription drugs that complied with regulations in Canada, the US and the United Kingdom. In fact,

says the department, Mr. Strempler obtained the pharmaceuticals from various source countries without ensuring they were safe and authentic, and some of the drugs were counterfeit.

The prescription orders were filled at a facility operated in the Bahamas and then labelled as being filled by RxNorth in Canada.

“Internet websites that illegally sell potentially substandard, counterfeit or otherwise unsafe pharmaceuticals pose a real threat to consumers,” said Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Stuart F. Delery, in the release. “The sentence handed down today serves as an effective deterrent to those who would peddle counterfeit pharmaceuticals—particularly those drugs trafficked over the Internet.”

The prosecutor in the case originally sought up to 20 years in prison and forfeiture of \$95 million in alleged business proceeds.

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“Internet websites that illegally sell potentially substandard, counterfeit or otherwise unsafe pharmaceuticals pose a real threat to consumers”

—Stuart F. Delery, Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General, United States Department of Justice