“Whatever government is elected needs to have a serious look at better using pharmacists in the system”

—Geraldine Vance, CEO, BC Pharmacy Association

The association argues that the new pharmacist services will be more cost effective, and help the province deal with a shortage of family physicians and unnecessary use of costly resources for less serious health issues. The proposed per-unit fees for the 7 clinical services range from \$5 to \$70.

The proposed services are modelled after programs that have been successful in other jurisdictions, explains Ms. Vance. They include a minor ailments program similar to the one implemented for pharmacists in Saskatchewan. Based on an estimate of \$95 million in BC physician billings for treatment of minor ailments in 2010-11, the BCPhA says empowering pharmacists to deal with many of these matters could save more than \$32 million a year.

“We argue that when dealing with something minor, such as insect bites or your baby’s diaper rash, your first port of call should be your community pharmacist,” says the association CEO. “Instead of ending up in an ER, for example, on a weekend, see your pharmacist, who will be trained to determine the best option for you—taking on a role of community-based triage.”

It is estimated that BC pharmacists delivered around 200,000 flu immunizations during the 2012-13 influenza season and according to Ms. Vance, that’s a good track record upon which to build.

“Certainly the ease of access for patients has been a big driver in flu immunizations,” she says. “And pharmacists are the low-cost provider of this service—at the end of the day these kinds of economic savings mean there is money in the health care system to meet other needs.”

BCPhA's proposed clinical services

- Trial prescription program
- Treatment of minor ailments
- Medication adherence services
- Self-monitoring of blood glucose in type 2 diabetes
- Community pharmacist-led anticoagulation management service
- Pharmacist-led smoking cessation services
- Asthma consultation service

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Pharmacy colleges in BC and Alberta still favour inducement bans, but not right away

“The [College of Pharmacists of BC] has long held the view that such a ban would be in the best interests of the public’s health”

—Mykle Ludvigsen, Director of Public Accountability and Engagement, College of Pharmacists of BC

Pharmacy regulators in British Columbia and Alberta say they remain committed to ending consumer inducements for pharmacy services, but both colleges have put the controversial changes on the back burner for the time being.

In the fall of 2012, the Alberta College of Pharmacists (ACP) proposed banning inducements on the grounds that rewards, loyalty-program points and coupons can lead patients to make unhealthy choices and that they undermine the patient-pharmacist relationship.

“Pharmacists cannot provide the best care when their patients transfer from pharmacy to pharmacy in pursuit of inducements,” said the ACP in a backgrounder on the issue. The College also expressed concern about patients delaying getting their medication or interrupting drug therapy to capitalize on an upcoming inducement campaign.

The College invited feedback on the proposal and by early December, had received a flood of comments. Meanwhile, a public debate on the issue played out in the media, with some consumer organizations and pharmacies expressing opposition to the ban.

“Given the large volume of information received and the complexity of the issue, council has decided that they need more time to consider it before they proceed with any decisions,” the ACP announced on its website after a council meeting on December 6, 2012.

The inducements issue was on the agenda once again as the council met April 4, 2013, but the College still wasn’t ready to move forward. Karen Mills, the ACP communications director, told *CPJ* that the College would take more time to determine timing and the appropriate

mechanism for implementing a ban—a government regulation, a professional standard or a component of the code of ethics.

In British Columbia, the government had prohibited inducements for prescription purchases covered by the PharmaCare program in July 2011. Last fall, the College of Pharmacists of BC proposed to extend the prohibition to all prescriptions, with the health minister having the final say on whether the ban would proceed.

As was the case in Alberta, the BC College received extensive feedback. “We received 13,000 e-mails on our overall package of changes, with the overwhelming majority of comments

being on the loyalty points issue,” says Mykle Ludvigsen, director of public accountability and engagement with the College. “Most of those who commented opposed the ban.”

The BC regulator decided to hold off on sending the recommended change to the government and give it further review, Mr. Ludvigsen told *CPJ*.

“At some point, we can expect the College to move forward with the prohibition,” he adds. “The board has long held the view that such a ban would be in the best interests of the public’s health.”

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Université de Moncton develops partnership with the goal of educating pharmacists in New Brunswick

The Université de Moncton is working to develop a pharmacy program.

The Université de Moncton is partnering with the University of Ottawa on a plan to provide pharmacy education in New Brunswick for the first time.

The 2 universities are working to develop a French-language Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) program that would accept 12 students each year. The degree would be granted from the University of Ottawa but most of the studies would take place in New Brunswick.

The project is aimed at helping New Brunswick deal with a shortage of pharmacists, says Edgar Robichaud, associate vice-president, academic, with the Université de Moncton. “The deficit is particularly acute for francophone pharmacists, especially in the more rural areas.”

Currently, half a dozen francophone students from New Brunswick can enrol each year in pharmacy programs at Quebec universities, but as Mr. Robichaud explains, “every year, a percentage of them decide to remain in Quebec once they graduate. The idea of having a program in New Brunswick would be to increase the retention rate so that more graduates remain to practise in the province.”

Many of the details of the program are still being worked out but at this stage, the plan is to have the pharmacy students do 2 years of a pre-pharmacy program primarily in New Brunswick, and also spend the final 2 years of the 4-year PharmD program in the province. Discussions are also taking place with the Université de