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Report says extending use of pharmacists and generic drugs can save health care system up to \$11 billion over 3 years

Canada's major drugstore chains and the generic pharmaceutical industry have jointly developed an action plan they say will save governments between \$8.5 billion and \$11 billion in health care costs over 3 years.

In a report entitled *9000 Points of Care: Improving Access to Affordable Health Care*, the Canadian Association of Chain Drug Stores (CACDS) and the Canadian Generic Pharmaceutical Association (CGPA) propose 5 main initiatives aimed at both reducing costs and improving patient access and health outcomes.

The savings laid out in the report are based on estimates independently evaluated by The Conference Board of Canada. Having third-party validation by a leading, independent research organization is important, says Denise Carpenter, president and CEO of CACDS.

"The Conference Board of Canada has expertise in economic trends and public-policy issues and they are as nonpartisan as you can get among think tanks," says Ms. Carpenter. "Having their endorsement is nothing but beneficial."

The report calls for more extensive and "smarter" use of both pharmacists and generic medications in the health care system.

While acknowledging progress in expanding pharmacists' scope of practice, the plan says more must be done to fully utilize pharmacists' skills and training, for example, by ensuring pharmacists in all jurisdictions deliver vaccinations and treat patients for minor ailments. The report says the potential savings

from further expansion of practice scope are between \$100 million and \$200 million.

The amount of billable professional pharmacy services available to pharmacists differs by province, says Ms. Carpenter. "For example, pharmacists in Alberta and Saskatchewan are permitted 8 billable professional pharmacy services, whereas Manitoba doesn't permit any. It is our sincere hope that *9000 Points of Care* will build on the success we've experienced thus far and improve access to affordable care."

The plan also proposes a more comprehensive shift of chronic-care support to pharmacists, noting that the medical costs associated with chronic conditions are currently estimated at \$42 billion. "If more pharmacists managed chronic disease conditions, they could save the federal government between \$1.4 billion and \$1.9 billion over 3 years," the report states.

Stating that 1 in 4 Canadians cannot afford their prescription drugs, the report also calls for "smarter" drug plans that encourage more use of lower-cost generics. It notes that generic drugs still account for only 2.6% of total health care spending in Canada.

The plan also proposes more use of pharmaceutical distributors in the safe and secure distribution of medications during public health emergencies and a national system of information-sharing and connectivity to improve prevention of adverse drug reactions.

The full plan is available at <http://9000pointsofcare.ca>.

BY KATHIE
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"It is our sincere hope that *9000 Points of Care* will build on the success we've experienced thus far and improve access to affordable care"

—Denise Carpenter,
President and CEO,
Canadian Association
of Chain Drug Stores

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