NOTES

Nova Scotia pharmacies preparing to administer flu vaccines with approval of new authority

Most pharmacies in Nova Scotia are expected to begin offering publicly funded flu vaccinations in the 2013-14 influenza season.

The stage has been set for Nova Scotia pharmacists to join their counterparts in New Brunswick, Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia in providing flu shots—now that provincial regulations, professional practice standards and a fee schedule are in place.

“We have had an overwhelming response from pharmacies and pharmacists,” says Allison Bodnar, Executive Director of the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia (PANS). “At least 90% of pharmacies plan to offer influenza vaccine this fall—270 out of 300 in the province—and we expect approximately 400 pharmacists will be certified to administer the injections.”

Regulations took effect on May 28, 2013, granting Nova Scotia pharmacists the authority to administer drugs by injection to any patient over the age of 5. The new authority covers a specified list of Schedule 1 drugs, as well as all Schedule 2 and 3 medications. The standards of practice were approved in June.

The provincial government has agreed to a professional fee of \$11.50 for each vaccination, with an annual increase of 25 cents for 3 years.

Many pharmacists have been certified to deliver injections for quite some time, Ms.

Bodnar says. “After the influenza pandemic of 2010, the profession believed the authority was coming and since then, up to 200 pharmacists have taken the training and achieved certification.”

Pharmacists whose original certification has lapsed will have to be re-certified but that training program is relatively short. Certification and re-certification courses were scheduled to run from July to September.

Meanwhile, PANS is preparing for upcoming discussions with the province to renegotiate tariffs, with the pending expiry of the current 3-year agreement. The plan is to have a new agreement in place in early 2014.

“As part of our preparations for these discussions, PANS has run a large minor ailments pilot,” says the Executive Director. “We are collecting the data around that and will have our reporting done by the end of September, in time for tariff negotiations starting in the fall.”

The pilot involved 27 pharmacies across Nova Scotia. Each pharmacy offered minor ailments services for 12 weeks and analysis of the data was to begin in August.

“We are analyzing a number of components of the service, including patient view, operational issues and ease of implementation, as well as the response from physicians and other health care partners,” says Ms. Bodnar.

BY KATHIE
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—Allison Bodnar,
Executive Director,
Pharmacy Association
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