LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Inconsistencies in eligibility criteria for medication assessment programs

I FOUND THE JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2014 ISSUE OF *CPJ* TO BE fabulous. I literally read the issue from cover to cover. Kudos to all of the authors and editors.

I had one comment on Pammett and Jorgenson's¹ article about eligibility requirements for community pharmacy medication review services. Table 1 in this article summarizes community pharmacy medication review programs in Canada. I note that the eligibility requirements for the Saskatchewan Medication Assessment Program (SMAP) in the table are missing a bit of information—*not all* individuals age 65 and over and living in the community can access this program.

While our pharmacy has embraced the new Medication Assessment Program, it is unfortunate that we cannot provide this service to the 40% of our patients who are First Nations individuals, due to their federal (rather than provincial) drug coverage. In October 2013, I forwarded correspondence to a variety of stakeholders requesting that SMAP coverage be extended to all residents of the province. The only reply I received was from Saskatchewan Health's Drug Plan and Extended Benefits Branch, which stated, "A decision on the

provision of professional pharmacy services such as medication assessments to First Nations individuals would rest with the NIHB [Non-Insured Health Benefits program] at Health Canada." I have no expectations of any response from NIHB.

The conclusion of Pammett and Jorgenson's article states, "The eligibility criteria used by provincially funded medication review programs in Canada are inconsistent and highly variable, raising doubt that all patients in need of such services are eligible to receive them as an insured health benefit." Isn't it unfortunate that across Canada we have such inconsistencies and that even within provinces there are ethnicity-based gaps in program access!

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Reference

1. Pammett R, Jorgenson D. Eligibility requirements for community pharmacy medication review services in Canada. *Can Pharm J (Ott)* 2014;147:20-4.