Pharmacare 2.0 aims to reboot national pharmacare conversation

IN JUNE, THE CANADIAN PHARMACISTS ASSOCIATION (CPhA) launched Pharmacare 2.0—a comprehensive 4-stage policy development process to develop a national consensus for a pan-Canadian pharmacare framework. Designed to reboot the pharmacare conversation, Pharmacare 2.0 aims to highlight the importance of access to pharmacy services as part of a sustainable pharmacare model to achieve better health outcomes and cost savings.

During the initial phase of Pharmacare 2.0, consultations with the pharmacy community began in order to develop pharmacy consensus on the key principles, policies and priorities for pan-Canadian pharmacare. These high-level consultations have been designed to leverage pharmacists' firsthand knowledge of the challenges and opportunities around a pan-Canadian pharmacare strategy.

While the pharmacare conversation is receiving headlines and increased attention by the media and other health care provider groups, CPhA has long been an advocate for pharmacare. CPhA contributed to the debate around pharmaceutical coverage during the development of the Health Accord from 2003 to 2004, which led to the inclusion of a Pharmaceutical Strategy as one of the accord's key elements. CPhA also developed a comprehensive position on catastrophic coverage in 2008 and conducted an extensive survey on pharmacare-related issues in 2012.

As leaders in the health care field, pharmacists are keenly aware that public policy gaps exist with regard to medication accessibility for patients. Canadians should be able to access medically necessary medications, regardless of income or where they live, as well as have comparable access to pharmacy services across the country.

Pharmacare 2.0 aims to change the pharmacare narrative from a focus on drug prices to a focus on optimal patient-centred care at an affordable price. Governments' primary focus on reining in drug costs risks missed opportunities for cost savings in other areas of the health system,

KEY PRIORITIES

CPhA believes that all Canadians should be able to access medically necessary medications, regardless of income. Any future pharmacare policy must address 4 key priorities:

- Addressing gaps between private and public systems
- Protecting Canadians from undue financial hardship
- Protecting patient access to a stable supply of clinically and cost-effective drugs
- Providing access to the full range of pharmacy services to achieve better health, better care and better value

such as improved medication adherence, early detection, chronic disease management and preventative health measures.

"Canadians face a multitude of barriers when it comes to effective medication use," says Carlo Berardi, Chair, Canadian Pharmacists Association. "While being able to afford their medications is first and foremost a fundamental necessity, we also need to ensure that Canadians are supported with the health advice and services pharmacists provide."

Ensuring fair drug prices and access to necessary medications is only one piece of a sustainable pharmacare model—patients also require access to the full range of pharmacy services, such as prescription renewals, injections, care plans and prescription modifications, to ensure safe and effective drug therapy and optimal health outcomes.

Filling more than 600 million prescriptions each year, Canada's 39,000 pharmacists are ideally positioned to provide the professional services and health advice to improve the health of Canadians and reduce the costs to our health system.

For more info on CPhA's Pharmacare 2.0 initiative, please visit www.pharmacists.ca/pharmacare. ■

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