Top 5 primary care topics for pharmacists in 2015

Araceli Gonzalez-Reyes, MSc; Pierre Pluye, MD, PhD; Jo-Anne Hutsul, BSc(Pharm), PhD; Barbara Jovaisas, BSc(Pharm); Philip Emberley, MBA, PharmD; Roland Grad, MDCM, MSc, CCFP, FCFP

THE E-THERAPEUTICS HIGHLIGHTS PROGRAM is an innovative continuing education program developed by the Canadian Pharmacists Association (CPhA) and the Information Technology Primary Care Research Group at McGill University. In this program, the CPhA e-mails weekly treatment recommendations (Highlights) to their members, based on their online clinical resource RxTx. Participating pharmacists are given the opportunity to rate the relevance, cognitive impact, usefulness, and expected health benefits for each Highlight received using the Information Assessment Method (www.mcgill.ca/iam), in exchange for continuing education credits. For this annual report, all of the ratings provided by participants in 2015 were analyzed, and the top 5 most beneficial Highlights were identified, showing the top primary care topics that concern pharmacists (Table 1). The analysis used the Benefit

of Information Index (BII),¹ which considers the proportion of ratings indicating an expected health benefit for at least 1 patient and half of the proportion of ratings indicating a possible health benefit for at least 1 patient. By calculating a BII value for each Highlight, we are able to identify through crowdsourcing those clinical information objects expected to have the most positive impact on the health of the Canadian population, as assessed by their pharmacists. In 2015, each Highlight was rated by an average of 172 participants. The Highlights were rated as “totally” or “partially” relevant in 56.6% of ratings completed by participants. Crowdsourcing is a force multiplier, which allows the traditional “ask-the-user” approach to reach a wider audience.^{2,3} The insight obtained from the ratings of participating CPhA members may be useful to all pharmacists, as large groups can be collectively wise in identifying relevant information.⁴ ■

From the Department of Family Medicine (Gonzalez-Reyes, Pluye), McGill University, Montreal, Quebec; the Canadian Pharmacists Association (Hutsul, Jovaisas, Emberley), Ottawa, Ontario; and the Herzl Family Practice Centre (Grad), Montreal, Quebec. Contact pierre.pluye@mcgill.ca.

Author Contributions: A. Gonzalez Reyes analyzed data and wrote the initial draft of the article with P. Pluye. All authors were involved in the design, data collection and the interpretation of results. All authors approved the final version of the article.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests: Highlights are produced by the Canadian Pharmacists Association. Three coauthors are CPhA editors/employees (J. Hutsul, B. Jovaisas, P. Emberley).

Funding: P. Pluye holds a Senior Investigator salary award from the “Fonds de recherche du Québec-Santé” (FRQS). This work is supported by the Canadian Pharmacists Association.

TABLE 1 Top 5 beneficial highlights of 2015, as rated by CPhA members

Highlight title	Highlight text	Total ratings	Benefit of Information Index (%)
Constipation in adults: Should docusate be recommended?	Evidence is lacking to support the effectiveness of the stool softeners docusate sodium and docusate calcium in the treatment of any type of constipation, including opioid-induced and functional constipation, and therefore they are not recommended [Evidence: SORT B].	233	39.5
Asthma in infants and children: Using a spacer device in children	Emphasis on good technique is crucial for the first 2-3 breaths with a spacer device/holding chamber. There is little additional benefit provided by subsequent breaths from these devices [Evidence: SORT C].	195	39.0
Influenza: Is immunization OK for people with egg allergy?	Egg-allergic adults and children may be vaccinated against influenza using a single, full dose of injectable trivalent or quadrivalent inactivated vaccine without a prior influenza skin test, irrespective of the immunization setting or of a past severe reaction to egg [Evidence: SORT B]. Because of a lack of data, the live attenuated intranasal influenza vaccine should not be administered to persons with a documented egg allergy.	184	32.1
Dementia: Managing sleep disturbances in Alzheimer's disease	Trazodone is also used to treat disrupted sleep/wake cycles and "sundowning" (worsening of behaviour as darkness falls). In a systematic review of various medications used to treat sleep disturbances associated with Alzheimer's disease (AD), only low-dose trazodone had some evidence of a beneficial effect based on a randomized controlled trial of 30 patients [Evidence: SORT B]. In the small trazodone study, 50 mg qhs administered for 2 weeks to community-dwelling patients with AD increased daily sleep time by 43 minutes with no cognitive or functional impairment and no other serious adverse effects. The review also concluded that no benefit was seen with melatonin and ramelteon (not available in Canada), while studies for other widely prescribed drugs (e.g., lorazepam, oxazepam, temazepam, triazolam, zolpidem, tryptophan) were excluded.	203	31.0
Menopause: Antidepressants for hot flashes?	Significant reduction in the frequency and/or severity of hot flashes has been shown with some selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors and serotonin–norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (e.g., citalopram, desvenlafaxine, escitalopram, paroxetine and venlafaxine) [Evidence: SORT A]. However, their use may be limited by adverse effects. In addition, antidepressants do not offer some of the health benefits of hormone therapy (HT; e.g., prevention of osteoporosis and urogenital atrophy), and long-term data regarding their safety and efficacy are lacking. Consider offering antidepressants to women with disruptive vasomotor symptoms if HT is contraindicated or undesirable.	205	26.8

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