Dietary sodium and the health of Canadians

WE WOULD LIKE TO ALERT THE READERS OF THE *CANADIAN Pharmacists Journal* to an updated fact sheet and call to action on dietary sodium.¹ The fact sheet and call to action highlights that high dietary sodium remains a major health risk to Canadians. About one-third of hypertension is attributed to high dietary sodium, which translates to approximately 2 million Canadians with hypertension related to excess sodium consumption. Other important facts that many may be unaware of include rapid ingestion of sodium (at 10 times or more the average daily level of consumption) can cause acute death, and high sodium intake is a probable procarcinogen for gastric cancer. Most are likely aware that Canadians eat too much sodium and that current efforts to reduce dietary sodium have had little impact. Hence, the call to action makes important recommendations to federal, provincial and territorial governments to more effectively implement comprehensive policies to reduce sodium in Canada's food supply. Most of the call to action recommendations are included in the 2010 Sodium Reduction Strategy for Canada, which received very strong provincial and territorial support in 2012 but which to date has not been implemented.^{2,3}

Canada and other nations have made voluntary commitments to reduce dietary sodium by 30% by 2025.⁴ Perhaps as a result, the mandate letter to the last 2 Federal Ministers of Health emphasized the need to reduce sodium in processed foods.⁵ Recently, the health necessity for successfully reducing dietary sodium was highlighted by updated data from

the Global Burden of Disease Study, indicating excess dietary sodium was the leading dietary risk in Canada, with over 12,000 deaths in 2017.⁶ A strong economic argument for markedly enhancing efforts to reduce dietary sodium was also made by a recent World Health Organization report indicating that reducing dietary sodium had the greatest return on investment of interventions to prevent and control noncommunicable chronic disease (\$13 returned for every \$1 spent).⁷

We call Canadians and especially Canadian health care professionals and scientists to advocate to politicians and policy makers to reinvigorate the Canadian effort to reduce dietary sodium.

The fact sheet and call to action on dietary sodium is supported by the Canadian Pharmacists Association, as well as Hypertension Canada, the Heart and Stroke Foundation, Canadian Cardiovascular Society, Canadian Society of Nephrology, Canadian Association of Cardiovascular Prevention and Rehabilitation, Canadian Council of Cardiovascular Nurses, College of Family Physicians of Canada, Diabetes Canada and the Canadian Society of Internal Medicine.

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