Cross-Canada updates

Stronger together

Canada's pharmacy associations work together on key, critical issues affecting the profession in support of strong associations, exceptional pharmacists and healthy Canadians. This *CPJ* feature highlights some of the work happening at pharmacy associations across the country.

SPOTLIGHT ON: Cannabis

Alberta Pharmacists' Association (RxA) | rxa.ca

RxA's Introduction to Medical Cannabis and the Role of the Pharmacist: RxA is offering a course for Alberta pharmacists who want to learn more about medical cannabis and get an early start on next year's continuing education. Join Dr. Shelita Dattani on GoPharmacist (<https://www.gopharmacist.ca/>) as she provides an overview of the different types of cannabinoids available in Canada and their pharmacological and therapeutic effects. She presents Canadian regulations on the use of cannabis for medical purposes and focuses on the pharmacist's role in advising patients who have been prescribed cannabis as part of their treatment plan. This course has been Canadian Council on Continuing Education in Pharmacy accredited for 1.5 continuing education credits. RxA also offers medical and recreational cannabis resources available for health care providers and patients at <https://rxa.ca/pharmacy-initiatives/medical-and-recreational-cannabis-resources.aspx>.

Association québécoise des pharmaciens propriétaires (AQPP) | aqpp.qc.ca

The legalization of recreational cannabis, effective October 17, 2018, gave the Association québécoise des pharmaciens propriétaires (AQPP) the opportunity to have further discussions about medical cannabis with government authorities. Unfortunately, despite potential side effects for patients, medical cannabis is not yet distributed by pharmacists, who can play a key role in patient safety. To encourage the distribution and management of medical cannabis in pharmacies, AQPP is engaged in a number of activities, including meetings and advocacy at the provincial and federal levels, consultation of legal opinions, training pharmacists and preparing a pilot project.

Canadian Pharmacists Association (CPhA) | pharmacists.ca

The legalization of recreational cannabis in Canada has had an impact on access to medical cannabis, with 1 in 4 medical cannabis users saying that it is now harder to access the cannabis they need. According to a survey jointly released in early July by the Canadian Pharmacists Association (CPhA), Canadians for Fair Access to Medical Marijuana and the Arthritis Society, access issues are just one of the unintended consequences of recreational cannabis legalization affecting medical cannabis patients. Supply issues, the cost of cannabis or a mix of these factors have also led 64% of medical cannabis users to underdose or stretch out their supply. More information on the survey and all of CPhA's cannabis resources can be found at www.pharmacists.ca/cannabis.

Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia (PANS) | pans.ns.ca

This fall, as Canada marks the first-year anniversary of the legalization of the recreational use of cannabis, the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia (PANS) will include a session called "Cannabis: The Role of the Pharmacist in Making Clinical Interventions and Managing Drug Interactions" at its Annual Conference at the Old Orchard Inn, Wolfville. This is the fourth year in a row that PANS will include a cannabis session at its conference. This is a response to feedback from our members who believe that this is an area in which continued education is required and is part of our commitment to ensure our membership receive the timeliest information in order to serve their patients to their full capacity.

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SPOTLIGHT ON: Government Relations

Pharmacists' Association of Newfoundland and Labrador (PANL) | panl.net

Residents of Newfoundland and Labrador went to the polls on May 16, electing a Liberal minority government led by Premier Dwight Ball. In advance of the election, the Pharmacists' Association of Newfoundland and Labrador (PANL) asked all parties for their position on many issues of importance to the provincial pharmacy industry, as well as commitments for funding for pharmacist services such as prescribing for minor ailments and pharmacist-delivered flu shots. As per their election promise, the Minister of Health and Community Services has committed to expand the province's flu vaccine program effective for the 2020-21 flu season. While the association would have liked to see the program in place for the upcoming flu season, we are pleased to see government's commitment to a pharmacist-delivered universal flu vaccine program in response to our advocacy efforts.

Pharmacists Manitoba | pharmacistsmb.ca

Pharmacists Manitoba has been continuing our government relations efforts. In May, Pharmacists Manitoba (then) Vice President Pawandeep Sidhu, Secretary Abby Lau and CEO Brenna Shearer attended the Blue Sky Gala and interacted with Premier Brian Pallister. Pharmacists Manitoba President Pawandeep Sidhu and CEO Brenna Shearer also later met with Deputy Minister of Health Karen Herd. We also successfully negotiated an 11.5% increase in Non-Insured Health Benefits dispensing fees during the past year and have ensured the fees will continue to increase for the next 3 years. Pharmacists Manitoba is hopeful that with continued advocacy on behalf of our members and by working with the Manitoba government, pharmacists will be able to practise their full scope and improve patient care and outcomes in our province.

Prince Edward Island Pharmacists Association (PEIPhA) | peipharm.info

Politically, the year 2019 continues to be "one to watch." Prince Edward Island has elected a minority Progressive Conservative government after a 12-year Liberal majority, with the first-ever Green official opposition. Working with this new government will involve building relationships with a whole new group of politicians and educating them on the important role pharmacists should be playing to improve the delivery of accessible, cost-effective health care. Federally, the details surrounding a national pharmacare program will be monitored very closely, in an effort to assess the impact and potential unintended consequences on the profession.

Other Highlights

Association of Faculties of Pharmacy of Canada (AFPC) | afpc.info

The Association of Faculties of Pharmacy of Canada (AFPC) is the national voice for academic pharmacy, providing leadership and resources for faculty members across Canada. Celebrating 75 years, AFPC's 2019 annual conference was held in Edmonton, June 11-14. Post conference, an Indigenization Symposium was held: Truth and Reconciliation in Canadian Pharmacy Education. Congratulations to the AFPC 2019 award winners! Faculty winners: Marie Rocchi (Toronto); Mary De Vera (British Columbia); Ping Lee (Toronto); Jamie Kellar (Toronto); Jean Lefebvre (Laval). Student winners: Courtney Lawrence (Manitoba); Shahrzad Salmasi (British Columbia); Amani Hamad (Manitoba); Valerie Long (Montreal); Giovanna Madeiros Schver (Toronto); Wajd Alkabbani (Manitoba). A special thanks to AFPC conference and award sponsors: GSK, Merck, Pfizer, Janssen, Canada Health Info-way, Council for Continuing Pharmaceutical Education and the Canadian Foundation for Pharmacy.

British Columbia Pharmacy Association (BCPhA) | bcpharmacy.ca

In late May, the British Columbia (BC) government announced the beginning of a 6-month transition to move rheumatology, dermatology, endocrinology and gastrointestinal patients from their original biologic medications to their biosimilar counterparts. The announcement was touted as a money-saving initiative to increase the use of biosimilars, and media coverage lauded the move as a "first" in Canada. As part of the transition, pharmacists are paid a patient support fee of \$15, which can only be

claimed once per patient regardless of how many biologics the patient is taking. The affected biologics are Lantus, Enbrel and Remicade, used in the treatment of diabetes, arthritis and Crohn's disease, respectively. The BC Ministry of Health said that collectively, these 3 medications cost government \$125 million in 2018. Government is hoping for a cost savings of \$96 million, spread over the next 3 years. Starting on Nov. 26, 2019, only biosimilars for those medications will be covered by BC's PharmaCare, unless special authority is granted.

New Brunswick Pharmacists' Association (NBPA) | nbpharma.ca

New Brunswick's measles outbreak highlighted this province's low vaccination rates. Approximately 20% of students in the anglophone school system and 10% in the francophone system cannot produce records confirming their vaccine status. The New Brunswick Pharmacists' Association (NBPA) strongly supported NB Education Minister Dominic Cardy's proposed legislation to remove nonmedical exemptions from the immunization requirements for public schools and licensed early childhood facilities. The NBPA issued a media release in support of the changes, and pharmacies across the province posted petitions to gather patient support for tightening the immunization requirements. The NBPA added that continued public education is needed to address the issue of vaccine hesitancy, and making it easier for people to access vaccinations would also help increase immunization rates. The NBPA will participate in the government's public consultation process on the proposed legislation later this year and present the petitions to Members of the Legislative Assembly.

Pharmacy Association of Saskatchewan (PAS) | skpharmacists.ca

The Pharmacy Association of Saskatchewan (PAS) is already preparing for the flu season and continues work on 2 new specialty modules for the smoking cessation program to complement our updated training. We continue to work with our regulatory and government partners in the final steps towards implementing the new Disease Prevention and Travel Health Services Policy and Framework for Saskatchewan Pharmacists. PAS is ensuring that members have access to the required and supportive training as well as assisting with communicating the expectations for pharmacists to provide the service to residents. PAS began the negotiation process with the provincial government in early summer and will continue to keep members and stakeholders up to date as they progress.