



Competition Bureau report findings will harm patient-pharmacist relationship

Nov. 26, 2008 - A report released this week by the Competition Bureau of Canada calls for provincial governments to provide remuneration for pharmacy services.

The report examined generic drug competition and how it can be maximised to reduce costs.

“The report raised some interesting points but it failed to offer solutions that have long-term savings and quality health outcomes for patients,” said Marnie Mitchell, CEO of the British Columbia Pharmacy Association.

“Many of concepts discussed in this report are counter-intuitive to the direction of pharmacy,” Mitchell said. “The health-care system is pushing for stronger relationships between patients and pharmacists because they improve health. The report’s suggestions harm that high-level of care. They also direct patients to mail order pharmacies which could put their health at risk and ultimately cost the health-care system more and limit patient choice by forcing them to use their insurer’s ‘preferred pharmacy’.”

A collaborative study completed by the BC Pharmacy Association, the Canadian Association of Chain Drug Stores and the B.C. Ministry of Health showed that, when all functions of a pharmacist are considered, it costs the pharmacy \$13.60 to provide the services. Those functions include: filling, verifying, counselling, helping with adherence, developing care plans, preventing interactions, consulting with other health professionals, assisting with private health plans, and more. However, they are only reimbursed for \$8.60

This funding gap and many other services, such a smoking cessation programs and blood pressure clinics, are supported by allowances from generic drug manufactures.

The British Columbian community pharmacy system is one of the safest drug therapy delivery systems in the world. A push toward mail order pharmacies will inevitably have patients source medications from outside the protection of our system putting their health at risk

Looking for ways to cut costs in the health care system is necessary, but it must also be recognized that pharmacy services improve and save lives. Patients need access to both the proper medication, and the services of their local medication expert – their community pharmacist.

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