



Competition Bureau report only looks at half the picture

Oct. 30, 2007 - A report released yesterday by the Competition Bureau of Canada failed to acknowledge that rebates from generic drug manufacturers are passed onto patients in the form of pharmacy services, which are severely underfunded by governments.

The report examined the complex generic drug supply model, but ignored the fact that the current model is what helps provide patients with essential pharmaceutical care.

“Without the income generated from the rebates coming from the generic manufacturers, necessary pharmacy services would be going unfunded,” says Marnie Mitchell, CEO of the British Columbia Pharmacy Association.

“By having regular conversations with patients about their health, and working to optimize drug regimes, pharmacists improve the quality of life and health outcomes for patients, and keep them out of the hospital,” Mitchell says.

In B.C. pharmacists are compensated with a per prescription fee. The maximum B.C.’s PharmaCare will pay per prescription has been frozen at \$8.60 since 2003.

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.

To summarize: the government pays \$8.60 to pharmacies to provide services that cost \$13.60 per prescription to provide, and are essential for securing positive health outcomes for patients.

Under this policy a significant gap exists between compensation and cost. That gap is made up for by the rebates or allowances provided to pharmacies by the generic drug manufacturers.

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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