

# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Doctors should open up to new options for providing better patient care**

The British Columbia Pharmacy Association is disappointed that the Canadian Medical Association has rejected a larger role for pharmacists as members of the health-care team.

The BC Pharmacy Association is a strong advocate for developing new ways to utilize the health-care team's medication experts – pharmacists.

An expanded scope for pharmacists would mean:

- 1) Improved drug therapy and better results for patients.
- 2) A more effective and efficient health care system.
- 3) More opportunities to identify patients with significant risk factors.
- 4) Encouraged collaboration between health-care providers.

"The College of Pharmacists of B.C. is in the process of developing a protocol under which pharmacists could perform a broader range of medication management practices," says Registrar Marshall Moleschi. "Existing rules already grant pharmacists authority to prescribe in an emergency and adapt prescriptions, but, the authority to adapt has not yet been fully exercised."

Pharmacists' authority to adapt prescriptions is provided for in the Pharmacist, Pharmacy Operations and Drug Scheduling Act. Hospital pharmacists have used this provision to work within protocols that allow them to alter dosages, formulations, or regimens, substitute a drug expected to have a similar therapeutic effect, or renew a prescription. Pharmacists practicing in a community setting could similarly exercise a broader scope of practice under a protocol adopted by the college council.

"As highly educated and knowledgeable experts on medication and interactions, pharmacists are well-positioned to play a larger role in their field of expertise," says Marnie Mitchell, CEO of the BC Pharmacy Association.

The CMA has rejected the idea that pharmacists could help provide patients with better health-care by having the authority to initiate prescriptions. Meanwhile, forms of pharmacist prescribing are already being adopted across the globe, including in Alberta. Pharmacists there have recently been granted the authority to prescribe independently under a set of guidelines established by their college, and only after receiving the proper training. While under their new authority they can refill and adapt prescriptions, they will not diagnose conditions.

"To improve patient outcomes and get the most from our health care system we must continue to work on making the best use of the system's existing resources," says Mitchell. "Pharmacists are the medication experts, an excellent resource for patients and the entire health care system."

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