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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health Services  
BC Pharmacy Association

### **B.C. CELEBRATES PHARMACIST AWARENESS WEEK**

VICTORIA – March 1 through March 7 is Pharmacist Awareness Week in Canada and pharmacists across British Columbia will be using the designated week as an opportunity to raise awareness about their contribution to the day-to-day health of British Columbians. This year's theme in British Columbia is "Your Pharmacist – the more they know, the more they can help."

B.C.'s pharmacists play an important role in health care today as patients turn to them for expert advice and counselling about safe and effective medication therapy.

"Pharmacists are an integral part of our hospitals and our communities and serve as an important source of knowledge," said Health Services Minister George Abbott. "As B.C.'s pharmacists take on an expanded role, they are more able to meet patients' needs and we are committed to supporting their efforts."

On Jan. 1, the Province announced pharmacists can renew most routine medications for up to six months without the patient having to present a new prescription as enabled by changes to the Health Professions (Regulatory Reform) Amendment Act, 2008. A pharmacist may also be able to change the prescribed dosage or substitute drugs, where it is appropriate. In all instances of renewal, changes and therapeutic substitution, pharmacists follow their professional judgement. Guidelines prepared by the College of Pharmacists of British Columbia and supported by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC, the BC Pharmacy Association, and the BC Medical Association ensure the well-being of all patients accessing this new service.

"All pharmacists in B.C. have extensive education, training and experience with drug therapies, and can make informed recommendations to their patients based on their histories, lifestyles and current health conditions," said Marnie Mitchell, CEO of the BC Pharmacy Association. "By providing easier access and greater convenience for patients to manage their medications, pharmacists are playing an important role in reducing pressure on our health-care system."

As part of Pharmacist Awareness Week, the BC Pharmacy Association has come up with five suggestions for getting the best value from medication purchases, to help ensure that British Columbians are able maximize their health while minding their wallets. Patients are encouraged to talk to their pharmacist before making any changes to medication regimens.

"These changes are inspired by what British Columbians told us during the Conversation on Health – that people wanted improved access and more choice on how they receive and access health services," added Abbott. "We are acting on our commitment to build an efficient, integrated health system that promotes the health of all citizens and provides high-quality accessible patient care, and B.C.'s pharmacists are a vital part of that system."

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An audio clip of Minister Abbott discussing Pharmacist Awareness Week is available at:  
[www.mediaroom.gov.bc.ca/DisplayEventDetails.aspx?eventId=436](http://www.mediaroom.gov.bc.ca/DisplayEventDetails.aspx?eventId=436)

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