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CPhA Proposed Position Statement on Pharmacist Prescribing

The Board of Directors of the Canadian Pharmacists Association (CPhA) is pleased to present its members and other pharmacy stakeholders with this proposed position statement on pharmacist prescribing. We would like your opinion on the statement and look forward to your feedback by July 9, 2007.

Background

The Canadian health care system has seen considerable change in the past few decades. Health care professions are evolving to meet the ever-increasing demands of delivering more complex care to Canadians. Governments have issued a number of reports which all call for change to the way health care is delivered. Much of this change has focussed on having the right health professional provide the right service at the right time.

An expanded scope of practice for pharmacists in Canada is an international trend that includes primary health care reform, effective utilization of health human resources, and the need to improve safety and outcomes of drug therapy.

For several years, CPhA has advocated collaborative prescribing by pharmacists to initiate and modify medications, as evidenced in *Pharmacists and Primary Health Care* and *CPhA Submission to the Romanow Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada*. In 2002, the Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada delivered its final report in which it stated that pharmacists could play a much larger role in ensuring quality use of medications in Canada and that this role could extend to prescribing medications.¹

Traditionally in Canada, the authority to prescribe medications has rested with a small number of professions. Many Canadians consider prescribing a drug as a physician ordering a new medication to treat a specific condition.

With recent changes to legislation or regulations in several Canadian provinces, many pharmacists now have the ability to initiate and modify drug therapy, ranging from renewing a continued care prescription to independent prescriptive authority. Pharmacists have a university degree specializing in medications and their use. Pharmacists have the knowledge and skills to manage medications and optimize drug therapy to improve health outcomes of Canadians. Pharmacists, like all health care professionals, have a moral obligation to act in accordance with the Codes of Ethics and Standards of Practice of their profession.

Pharmacist prescribing includes a wide range of activities, such as:

- prescribing over-the-counter and prescription drugs to treat minor, self-diagnosed or self-limiting disease conditions
- providing emergency supplies of prescribed medication to a patient
- monitoring and refilling existing prescriptions to ensure appropriate and effective care
- modifying a prescription written by another prescriber to alter dosage, formulation, regimen or duration of the prescribed drug

¹ Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada. 2002. *Building on Values: The Future of Health Care in Canada – Final Report* www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english/pdf/romanow/pdfs/HCC_Final_Report.pdf.

- modifying a prescription written by another prescriber to provide a therapeutic alternative to improve drug therapy or provide continuity of therapy
- prescribing medications for patients through delegated authority and collaborative practice agreements, or by using protocols as established by institutions or jurisdictions
- comprehensive drug therapy management where the pharmacist, working with other health professionals, assumes responsibility for establishing and maintaining a patient's chronic drug therapy

Pharmacists have long had a prescriber role in the institutional setting in Canada where they make significant contributions to the quality of drug therapy and patient outcomes by initiating, monitoring and adjusting drug therapy.

Currently in the community setting, pharmacists assess and triage patients for chronic and self-limiting conditions, and assess, recommend and monitor prescription and nonprescription drug therapy for thousands of Canadians each day.

CPhA is committed to obtaining recognition and authority for pharmacists to practise at a level that allows them to play a larger role in ensuring the quality of medication use and optimizing drug therapy to help patients achieve health goals that will improve their quality of life.

The position of CPhA on pharmacist prescribing is that:

1. All decisions related to medication management, including prescribing, must be in collaboration with and in the best interest of the patient and focus on addressing the health care needs of the patient.
2. Pharmacists are medication experts and play a significant role in the prescribing and use of medication in the Canadian health care system.
3. The pharmacist, by having the authority to initiate and modify prescriptions, can improve the safety and effectiveness of drug therapy. In addition, as the most accessible health professional, pharmacists will be able to improve access to appropriate medication therapy for patients.
4. A patient-pharmacist relationship is essential to allow a pharmacist to prescribe optimally and carry out follow-up activities.
5. Pharmacists who prescribe should do so within their area of competence, scope of practice and with sufficient clinical knowledge of the patient.
6. Pharmacists require access to the patient and their relevant health information, which may include diagnosis, therapeutic intent and laboratory results. Pharmacists require the authority to order laboratory tests for the purpose of ensuring quality medication use.
7. Collaboration with other health providers is an important and integral component to pharmacist prescribing and medication management. This includes close contact and ongoing, two-way communication and documentation regarding drug therapy decisions. Prescribing by pharmacists should complement care provided by other health professionals.
8. Actions related to medication management need to be communicated verbally, in writing or through electronic media, when appropriate, to other health professionals in the circle of care, and all actions should be supported by documentation. A shared electronic health record will facilitate this communication.
9. Legislation and regulations should enable rather than oblige pharmacists to prescribe.
10. Governments must ensure legislation enabling pharmacist prescribing is consistent with other policies in health care. This includes recognition of the pharmacist as a prescriber for the purpose of reimbursement through public and private insurance plans.

CPhA is committed to ongoing dialogue with pharmacists, other health professionals, their associations and regulatory bodies, and the public to enhance understanding of the goals and scope of pharmacist prescribing activities.