

# Pharmacists Scope of Practice

## Neighbourhood Pharmacies' Position:

- Pharmacists are essential, accessible primary care providers, critical to healthcare systems across Canada, and routinely consulted by patients and other healthcare professionals. Making the necessary investments and changes to support an expanded scope of practice will enable pharmacists and pharmacy technicians to help manage the load on primary care physicians and hospitals by providing critical services patients can access conveniently.
- Underutilized capabilities in the pharmacist's full scope of practice include: the ability to renew, adapt and initiate prescriptions, administer medications by injection, and deliver testing and immunization services in all provinces, ensuring every Canadian has equitable, universal access to the full range of services pharmacists are trained to provide.
- By funding and enabling the provision of critical pharmacy services beyond medication fulfillment, pharmacists will be in an enhanced position to provide greater access and optimized care pathways for patients, including through virtual and appointment-based care.
- Recognizing the importance of remuneration as an enabler of scope expansion is critical. Pharmacy services should be adequately funded to account for the time, resources, and materials required to deliver quality care. The value of pharmacy services should be considered using a system-wide lens. Where pharmacy services are equivalent to services offered by other healthcare providers, pharmacists should be reimbursed at an equal amount.



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With nearly 11,000 pharmacies and more than 35,000 pharmacy professionals practicing in virtually every community in Canada, pharmacies are vital to our healthcare system.[1] Patients trust pharmacists when it comes to health and wellness needs.[2]

Pharmacists are primary providers of medication management services. Their participation identifies and resolves the drug therapy problems that can lead to hospitalization. Reported adverse drug events account for about 12 per cent of emergency room visits and cost Canada's healthcare system an estimated \$2.6 billion per year in hospitalizations. Adverse drug reactions (35 per cent), improper drug selection (17 per cent), and noncompliance (16 per cent) are all causes of preventable hospitalizations.[3]

In most provinces, pharmacists assess, diagnose, prescribe, and initiate medication for common ailments. A recent analysis of common ailments programs in Canada estimates these ailments account for 10-20 per cent of physician workload, at a time when physicians already face capacity strains.[4] Additionally, approximately 15 per cent of Canadians do not have a family physician, and 78 per cent of Canadians are likely to visit a pharmacist to manage common ailments.[5]

Although they represent the third largest group of healthcare providers after nurses and physicians,[6],[7] pharmacists are underutilized. Since they are often the first, most frequent touchpoint patients have with the healthcare system,[8] empowering pharmacists to practice to their full scope maximizes resources while supporting patient care. Eighty-four per cent of Canadians agree that allowing pharmacists to do more for patients will improve health outcomes.[9]

While pharmacists' robust training, education, and licensing requirements are consistent across the country, their scope of practice varies by province.[10] Ten provinces allow pharmacists to extend existing prescriptions; nine allow adapting medication dosages and formulations; seven enable them to provide therapeutic substitutions and initiate prescriptions for minor ailments,[11] yet only four provinces allow pharmacists to order and interpret lab tests.



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By enabling the use of point of care testing in community pharmacies, pharmacists can screen for infectious diseases and monitor chronic disease therapies. The result is shorter turnaround times, expedited decision-making, improved disease management and an overall increase in the efficiency of care.[12] Pharmacists should also have access to laboratory findings and electronic medical records to ensure continuity and promote collaborative care.

Pharmacist interventions correlate with increased vaccination rates, better health outcomes, and improved return on investment for every dollar spent.[13] Based on a Canadian Pharmacists' Association report, implementation of three pharmacy services (immunization, smoking cessation, and medication review for cardiovascular diseases) could yield up to \$25.7 billion in savings over the next 20 years.[14] The critical services pharmacists provide result in direct and indirect savings to the healthcare system.[15] Pharmacists should be remunerated at an amount equal to other healthcare providers when delivering services offered by other healthcare providers.

Pharmacists consistently rank among the most trusted healthcare providers.[16] As health system partners, pharmacists help reduce wait times by ensuring patients receive the care they need – when and where they need it. Pharmacists in all provinces are routinely relied upon to provide medication and disease management as well as immunization services. Pharmacists should be empowered to work to their full scope of practice in every province and recognized for their expertise in delivering accessible, high-quality care to patients in their communities.

## Pharmacists Most Trusted Healthcare Providers

*Pharmacists consistently rank among the most trusted healthcare providers. Most Canadians trust pharmacists when it comes to vaccinations (87 per cent), healthy lifestyle changes (90 per cent), advice on medications (96 per cent), management of common ailments (93 per cent), and management of chronic conditions (90 per cent). Ninety-three per cent of Canadians believe pharmacists are an essential part of the healthcare system and have a positive impression of pharmacists.[17]*



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