

CANADA'S HOSPITAL PHARMACISTS, COMMUNITY PHARMACISTS AND PHYSICIANS: CANADIANS ARE PAYING THE PRICE FOR DRUG SHORTAGES

January 14, 2013

OTTAWA – According to the results of a new survey completed by over 1,070 members of the Canadian Pharmacists Association, Canadian Medical Association, and Canadian Society of Hospital Pharmacists in October 2012, drug shortages clearly remain a problem for Canada's health system. The survey confirms that the health and well-being of patients is being negatively affected, and that physicians and pharmacists are devoting a significant amount of time to dealing with shortages, time that could be better spent improving patient care.

According to the survey, 66% of physicians indicated that drug shortages have become worse since 2010, and 94% of pharmacists reported that they had difficulty sourcing a medication for a patient in the past week. Sixty-four percent of physicians indicated that drug shortages had consequences for patients, while 41% of pharmacists reported that their patients' health had been compromised due to drug shortages.

Physicians and pharmacists both reported that drug shortages have compromised care with up to 20% of patients impacted. Most frequently noted consequences are:

- Delayed access to medication
- Use of a less effective medication or formulation
- Increased risk of an adverse effect or safety incident

In addition, one out of 5 physicians reported that clinical deterioration had occurred in a patient.

While pharmacists and physicians are trying to source medication for some patients, they have less time to dedicate to other patients:

- 67% of physicians reported an increase in time spent on research and consultation to source alternative medication.
- 47% of physicians reported an increase in length of patient visits due to substitution concerns.
- 61% of community and hospital pharmacists had difficulty sourcing a medication in their last shift.
- 76% of community and hospital pharmacists indicated that drug shortages have a significant impact on their work load with more time spent looking for alternative drugs and communicating with other health professionals about drug shortages.

“Let there be no doubt – these results demonstrate that drug shortages remain a serious problem in the Canadian health care system. Patients are suffering, and the ability of health providers to deliver quality care for all Canadians is being compromised”, stated Doug Sellinger, President of the Canadian Society of Hospital Pharmacists. “The efforts of healthcare professionals to lessen the impact on patients have come at the cost of diverting personnel from other areas of care; this diversion is not sustainable. We need a reliable, resilient system to prevent, report, and manage drug shortages”, he added.

“Drug shortages impact patient care, patient health, and the efficiency of the overall health care system,” said Dr Anna Reid, President of the Canadian Medical Association. “Patients who can’t get the medicines they need pay a terrible toll. The commitment of physicians and other health care professionals has helped to lessen the impact on their patients, but it comes at a price: time better spent with patients is instead being used by physicians to identify alternative drugs and therapies.”

“Our organizations are calling on governments, industry, and other stakeholders to continue working towards developing effective, sustainable solutions to dealing with drug shortages,” stated Paula MacNeil, President of the Canadian Pharmacists Association. “CPhA has taken a lead on this issue for many years, but only through collaborative efforts will we see meaningful change.”

Additional survey results can be accessed through the survey backgrounder at www.pharmacists.ca/drugshortages; www.cma.ca; or www.cshp.ca.

-30-

For more information, please contact:

Jeff Morrison, Director, Government Relations and Public Affairs
Canadian Pharmacists Association
(613) 523-7877, x386; jmorrison@pharmacists.ca

Myrella Roy, Executive Director
Canadian Society of Hospital Pharmacists
(613) 736-9733, x225; mroy@cshp.ca

Lucie Boileau, Senior Advisor, Communications and Public Outreach
Canadian Medical Association
(613) 731-8610, x1266; (613) 447-0866 (cell)
Lucie.Boileau@cma.ca