



May 10, 2009

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Dear Sirs:

With the provincial election now underway, the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia (PANS) would like to know your positions on key issues that affect our members. Please provide your responses to the questions below by Tuesday, June 2. In the interest of transparency, please note that your responses will be shared with Nova Scotia's 1200 pharmacists.

There are two inextricably-linked issues that the Government of Nova Scotia must address in order to improve patient care, reduce drug costs and ensure Nova Scotians have access to drugs and pharmacy services regardless of where they live – Expanded Scope of Practice and Modernizing the Compensation Framework for pharmacy.

Expanded Scope of Practice

A variety of factors, including an aging population, health practitioner shortages and rising costs are placing unprecedented strains on Nova Scotia's health care system. It is vital that the Government take every action possible to strengthen the system and improve health care services for Nova Scotians. Key to this is ensuring that all health practitioners, including pharmacists, are able to

practice to the full extent of their training and are not prevented from providing valuable health services which they are qualified to provide.

PANS therefore urges the Government to expand pharmacist scope of practice to allow pharmacists to perform a range of additional services that would benefit Nova Scotians, such as:

- Medication reviews for all Nova Scotians.
- Expanded prescribing role.
- Assessment and administration of vaccines.
- Therapy assessment and modification such as adjustments for safety and efficacy in renal impairment, and medication dosing adjustments based on blood work.
- Assessment for minor illnesses (e.g. allergies, minor injuries, first aid, dermatological conditions, etc.).
- Ordering, receiving, interpreting or performing tests for monitoring purposes.

The current spread of the A/H1N1 virus underscores the role pharmacies play as vital infrastructure in our health care system (i.e. by providing information and advice as a first point of contact, conducting assessments of patients and, if necessary, providing access to anti-viral drugs), and how much more pharmacies could do to care for Nova Scotians if given expanded scope of practice (for example, providing immunizations when a vaccine becomes available or prescribing anti-virals.).

Questions:

- 1. What is your position on expanding the scope of practice for pharmacists?**
- 2. Do you believe expanding pharmacist scope of practice would improve care for Nova Scotians and if so, how?**
- 3. Do you support expanding pharmacist scope of practice to include each of the services listed above? Please answer yes or no regarding each service.**
- 4. Please list any additional services you believe pharmacies should be able to provide.**

Modernizing the Compensation Framework

While some positive steps have been taken in Nova Scotia, the compensation framework for pharmacy services is outdated and does not serve the interests of patients or the health care system. It focuses too much on paying pharmacists for dispensing drugs and not enough on maximizing pharmacist expertise to improve patient care and lower drug costs.

The compensation framework should be modernized to compensate pharmacies for providing a broad range of value-added consultation services to patients. This would ensure that pharmacies are:

- Incited to provide services not necessarily related to dispensing such as medication management, counseling, screening and referral, lifestyle interventions, health promotion and

- compliance which are both valuable to patients and often reduce drug costs; and
- Recognized for the value they provide when they intervene to reduce or simplify medication regimens for reasons of efficacy, safety, simplicity or cost. The current system reduces compensation for pharmacies as fewer drugs are provided.

In short, the compensation framework must be modernized, in conjunction with an expansion of the scope of practice for pharmacists, to achieve maximum results for both patients and the health care system.

Questions:

- 1. What is your position on modernizing the compensation framework for pharmacists?**
- 2. With a new agreement scheduled to be negotiated between the province and its community pharmacies in 2010, and the Nova Scotia College of Pharmacists currently working on drafting an expanded scope of practice position paper, will you commit to expanding the scope of practice and modernizing the compensation framework for pharmacists by the end of 2010?**

Conclusion

PANS is committed to working with the Government of Nova Scotia to improve the health of Nova Scotians and to ensuring the viability of our health care system. Expanding the scope of practice and modernizing the compensation framework for pharmacy services are vital to ensuring pharmacies continue to play their pivotal role in delivering health services to patients, both in providing access to drugs and in the provision of expert information and advice.

Nova Scotia's 1200 pharmacists look forward to receiving your replies by Tuesday, June 2. Please send them via email to sarah.kirby@pans.ns.ca.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours truly,

Glenn Rodrigues
President