



CANADIAN  
PHARMACISTS  
ASSOCIATION

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## Supporting and recognizing pharmacists as essential health care providers during COVID-19

**March 25, 2020 (Ottawa):** The COVID-19 pandemic is evolving every day, but what remains constant is the hard work, dedication and sacrifices being made by front-line health care providers across Canada. In our hospitals and in our communities, we are depending on our health care workers now more than ever.

We know that all jurisdictions are working diligently to provide much-needed protections and supports to health care workers, but there are still some major gaps that exist for many of them. We cannot get through this pandemic without our health care heroes. We are calling on all levels of government to make the health and safety of front-line health care workers a priority, including pharmacists. Pharmacists are essential health care providers and they should be extended the same protections as other providers. With clinics and public health lines overwhelmed, over the past week alone, millions of Canadians have gone to a pharmacy to speak to a pharmacist about COVID-19 concerns.<sup>1</sup> We urge the federal government to work immediately with provincial and territorial governments to provide pharmacists and all essential health care providers with the supports they need to continue to serve our communities.

### Personal protective equipment

We understand that personal protective equipment is scarce and supply must be allocated carefully. We are asking governments to recognize pharmacists and pharmacy staff, who continue to provide care to patients every day, as essential health care providers and include them as part of the PPE allocation process. It is their duty to keep patients safe, but they can't succeed if they themselves aren't protected.

### Health workforce testing

While most Canadians are being asked to self-isolate, pharmacies are being designated as essential services across each jurisdiction. As such, community pharmacists and their staff are at increased risk of exposure to COVID-19 as they continue to provide medication and care to patients. Should a pharmacy staff member contract COVID-19, it would not only risk community transmission, but it would also likely force the pharmacy to close, impacting hundreds if not thousands of Canadians. As governments update their testing protocols, we urge officials to prioritize COVID-19 testing for pharmacy staff and other health providers to prevent asymptomatic transmission of the virus to our most vulnerable citizens and to ensure that the health workforce can continue working at full capacity over the course of the pandemic.

### Childcare

With the recent surge in requests for medical supplies and medications and the public's increasing need for health information, the demands placed on pharmacies and their staff have increased substantially in the last few weeks. Like other regulated health care providers across Canada, pharmacists and pharmacy staff should be receiving the same supports to enable them to go to work every day and focus on caring for patients. In many provinces, where

childcare has been made available to certain essential service providers, it has not been made available to pharmacists and pharmacy technicians who are remaining open in their communities.

### **Mental health supports**

Pharmacists and other front-line health care workers are among the most vulnerable to harmful mental health outcomes associated with COVID-19. They are putting in long hours, risking potential exposure to the virus and worrying about transmitting the virus to their patients and families. We are depending on these providers for their strength and resilience during this time, therefore supports must be made available to help them cope with the challenges they face every day.

Governments across the country are designating pharmacies as essential services that will remain open during the COVID-19 crisis. Pharmacists and their pharmacy staff are stepping up. They are there for their patients and their communities, and we need governments to be there for them. Pharmacists will continue to work hard to support their patients and communities during this difficult time. We are hopeful that governments will acknowledge their efforts and provide them with the supports they need to continue this important work.

### **About the Canadian Pharmacists Association**

*The Canadian Pharmacists Association (CPhA) is the uniting national voice of pharmacy and the pharmacist profession in Canada. As pharmacists undertake an enhanced role in the delivery of health care services, CPhA ensures that the profession is recognized as a national leader in health care, influencing the policies, programs, budgets and initiatives affecting the profession and the health of Canadians. More information is available at [www.pharmacists.ca](http://www.pharmacists.ca).*

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<sup>1</sup> Abacus Data. COVID-19 and Canadians' state of mind: worried, lonely, and expecting disruption for at least 2 to 3 months. March 25, 2020. <https://abacusdata.ca/coronavirus-covid19-abacus-data-mood-polling/>