

August 15, 2011

To Whom It May Concern,

Having only worked for the past 2 years as a pharmacist, I am one of the newest additions to pharmacy in New Brunswick. In that time I have seen tremendous growth in pharmacists' scope of practice with pharmacist prescribing, immunizations and the PharmaCheck medication review initiative. Being a recent graduate I know that pharmacists have the skills to do more for the public and reduce the burden on the system. During my education it was made clear that pharmacies could not be financed by dispensing fees alone, and we as pharmacists would need to advocate for fees for our professional "cognitive" services. Just recently I became aware of how dramatically drug costs are increasing, and I agree that it is necessary to make changes in New Brunswick so that our system can be sustained and improved.

As pharmacists we pride ourselves on being the most accessible health care professionals. It is a trait that allows us to create relationships and provide daily care to our patients. Because this time spent counselling and providing cognitive services is not covered by the dispensing fees we receive, we rely on generic trade allowances to finance this time. By providing drug information in our pharmacy aisles, researching and answering patient questions, identifying drug related problems, and adapting and continuing required medications, we can reduce unnecessary visits to other primary care providers (ie: physicians, clinics, out-patient care) and therefore decrease costs to the provincial system. All of these services that pharmacists provide are currently funded by trade allowances.

I can attest to the fact that pharmacists are highly trusted in the public eye. When pharmacists were trained and began working as immunizers in the province, the public did not hesitate to use our services. The implementation of these systems within our pharmacies comes at a cost, and we were excited to expand our scope of practice ahead of many other provinces. By accessing the public at our pharmacy counters we can identify and provide disease preventing vaccines. It is through the help of the funding from generic rebates and through the provincial support of these programs that we as pharmacists can contribute to the overall wellness of the province.

Having participated in the New Brunswick PharmaCheck program, it is clear that pharmacists can play a major role in primary care for our aging population. Many individuals are taking medications that they do not require any longer, and many forgot why crucial medications were prescribed. This is confirmed by a recent New Brunswick Health council report that states that 47% of patients taking medications for chronic disease did not know what they were for. There is a huge need for pharmacists to fill in the gaps in care for this population and enable them to live independently and prevent unnecessary entry into the healthcare system.

Pharmacy is a known supporter of many charitable events and organizations. I feel very fortunate to work in a profession where we have the ability to give back to our communities and the individuals within them. Trade allowances from generic rebates enable us to support these causes and gain the respect of the public we serve.

Upon graduation from university in 2009 I knew that changes to generic drug pricing would be coming for pharmacy. I take this regulation of generic drug pricing as an opportunity to promote the skills and motivation pharmacists possess to reach our potential with respect to patient care and integration into provincial healthcare. I know that as pharmacists, we can adapt to the changes that take place. I hope however that our services are recognized and that our time spent providing primary care to the patients of New Brunswick is fully realized.

Sincerely,

Julia Belliveau  
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