

August 12, 2011

The Honourable Madeleine Dube
Minister of Health, Government of New Brunswick
Department of Health
Fredericton, New Brunswick

Dear Minister,

As stated in the Aims and Principles of the New Brunswick Conservatives "We will consult New Brunswickers on public policy matters before implementing solutions." I appreciate the opportunity to voice my opinion.

I am writing in response to the call for input on the forthcoming policy on Fair Drug Prices for New Brunswickers. I am an independent pharmacy owner in a small community in New Brunswick. I have worked in many different situations and communities across the province over the last 10 years.

Studies show that the actual cost of filling a prescription is in the 13 to 14 dollar range. Currently we are being paid \$9.40, a price that has increased only twice over the past 10 years. Trade allowances obtained by pharmacies from generic manufacturers are needed to make up this difference as well as pay for numerous other services provided by pharmacist to New Brunswickers without compensation. The following points address some of these services:

1. The community in which I practice has two family doctors, two nurse practitioners, and a modest health centre. As a trusted health care professional, I am the first health professional contacted in numerous situations which helps the community deal with the lack of other health care professionals available. The consultation that I provide to these patients helps them with a majority of their minor issues and saves numerous trips to doctors, health clinics, and emergency rooms.
2. We assist patients with issues they are having with drug plans. We make calls to help them obtain coverage, deal with special, as well as many other issues that arise. There are parts of our population that because of age, lack of education, and location are unable to handle these issues.
3. We are the first line contact with doctors for prescription errors, dose changes, and general questions patients may have.
4. We provide maintenance medications for patients that are unable to see their doctors.
5. We educate patients on medication, as well as many other things such as diet, blood glucose testing, blood pressure monitoring, etc. Pharmacist could play a key role in New Brunswick's Comprehensive Diabetes Strategy. I cannot think of more accessible health professional available with the knowledge pharmacists have about diabetes. Along with doctors, dieticians, and diabetic educators we could make great strides in preventing and treating diabetes.
6. The majority of pharmacies have compliance packaging available. This is a valuable tool for our aging population for which we receive little or no reimbursement.
7. We deliver to seniors and those unable to make it to the pharmacy.
8. We administer vaccines and other injectable medication that saves numerous trips to doctors, health centres, and hospitals.

These and other services are some of the things that pharmacies do on a daily basis that trade allowances from generic drug manufacturers subsidise. Without that funding some of these services would have to be reduced or cut entirely.

In addition to the above mentioned services we could also do the following to help reduce expenditures on health care:

1. Medication reviews which could eliminate unneeded medications and possible drug-drug interactions as well as decrease trips to the hospital and doctors office.
2. 30 day trial prescription program to decrease wasted medication.
3. Interpretation of lab values.
4. Drug substitution. Give pharmacist the ability to substitute a less expensive generic medication that is available instead of a more expensive brand name medication. There are some instances when a certain medication is needed but the majority of the time this substitution can occur with substantial savings.
5. Investigate a way of faster approval of generic medications.

The majority of the agreements that have been reached across Canada have been fair to pharmacy. This agreement can save New Brunswickers money and also be sustainable for pharmacy. There is also a chance that this could be the end of small community pharmacies like mine. Without proper funding a reduction in hours and staff would have to occur and some or all of the services currently offered would be decreased or stopped all together.

In closing I would like to state I am proud to be a Progressive Conservative in the province of New Brunswick. Both my father and my uncle have run in provincial elections in the past and are still active in the party. Point 5 of the Aims and Principles of the New Brunswick Conservative Party states "The creation of prosperity can best be achieved by a free enterprise economy". Too much government intervention in a case like this could be catastrophic to a business like mine and many others across the province. We would fall prey to the larger corporations that can afford to run one small department, like pharmacy, at a loss. Some small pharmacies would undoubtedly have to close, as so many other small retailers have had to in the past. If a New Democrat government can come to a fair agreement in Nova Scotia, which most closely resembles New Brunswick, I have full confidence that our government can do the same.

Thanks again for the opportunity.

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