

Pharmacists in New Brunswick are busy people. Every day we see hundreds of clients seeking medical advice as well as filling hundreds of prescriptions. At any one time throughout a day in the pharmacy, the pharmacist is pulled in several directions-phone advice; customers waiting in the vitamin section, cough and cold section, skin care, first aid, etc.; prescriptions waiting to be checked and monitored so customers can get home to sick family members or get back to their busy lives; blood pressure questions and so on. On a regular basis, a pharmacist consultation regarding first aid, allergic reactions, cough and cold issues, saves a patient an emergency room visit or a visit to the doctor's office. It is easy to see why pharmacists are one of the most valued and trusted Health Care Professionals. Pharmacists are NOT just pill counters. Pharmacists are many things to a lot of people- We are the listening ear when patients cannot see their doctor because they are so busy they are booking weeks out; when the young woman is started on antidepressants and is nervous about side effects and the affect on her nursing child; when an elderly family member is not acting like their usual self; when a child gets stung by several bees; etc. Pharmacists are in constant demand. Pharmacists stock and supply diapers, insulin Pump supplies, Ostomy supplies, feeding tube supplies, etc for our customers with special needs and very often set up files for these patients and bill the government for the needed supplies while keeping track of the dollar amounts so the patient does not go over their monthly limit. Pharmacists are constantly asked to renew prescriptions because the patient forgot their yearly check up was due or because the doctor is so busy they cannot get in to see the doctor when needed- very often patients are told by doctors' receptionists to get the renewal from the pharmacist. Family members visiting from other cities forgetting their medications home come in looking for help to maintain their medication regime. Flare ups from the cold sore that has been dormant for years, the sinus condition that hasn't bothered the patient since last spring, the Epi Pen that has expired require the pharmacist to prescribe for their patient to help ensure quality of life and good health.

Pharmacists willingly do what their profession has taught them to do -help people.

Pharmacists also dispense prescriptions, for this we are reimbursed, not what it costs us to dispense a prescription, but what a third party feels we should be paid to dispense a prescription. Every day pharmacists dispense hundreds of prescriptions taking due care to ensure the prescription is dispensed correctly as written, is the correct medication for the right patient, does not interfere with other medications the patient is taking including non prescription medications, is the right dose for the patient. Every day pharmacists make calls to the prescribing doctor to have dosage changes made, refills added, medication changed (have not been on the medication for a year-on a new one; not on that dose now), to not substitute a medication as the generic does not work as well or causes allergies, to get a replacement when a drug is short from the manufacturer. Pharmacists also adapt prescriptions to ensure the patient gets the correct dose of the right medication in a timely manner. Pharmacists are not reimbursed for the calls or adaptations but only for dispensing the prescription. Pharmacists also take the time to talk to the patient about the medication, its usage, how to take it and when, to answer the patient's questions and in a lot of cases will call the patient back at another time to ensure the the patient is getting the expected results from the medication.

Pharmacists are trusted and are accessible.

For years pharmacists have provided all the above services while only being reimbursed, partially, for dispensing prescriptions. Inflation, rug cost increases, wages increases (lack of pharmacists and trained technicians), etc have all contributed to the cost of dispensing increasing. Fee increases have not kept pace with the growth in expenses. Pharmacies have had to increase staffing to keep up with the growth in the numbers of prescriptions being filled- population is living longer and using more medications per capita. The average price per prescription has increased readily over the years but with the fee and markup either staying the same or slightly increasing or as the case is with markup, disappearing, the expense is in the cost of the medications. Yes, trade allowances have existed for years, and they have supplemented

the fees that have not kept pace with the actual price to dispense. Trade allowances have allowed pharmacies and pharmacists to provide the public with the services that they need and expect from their local pharmacies as the most readily accessible health care professional.

As a business owner, I understand the need for Fair Drug Prices for New Brunswickers but I also see the need to be fairly reimbursed for services provided by my pharmacy staff in order to maintain the quality services my customers need and expect. It is difficult to pass on the price of our expertise to the consumer who expects it to be free or covered by Medicare. When they go to the doctor for an injection do they pay or is it covered in the price of the office visit? When a patient sees the doctor for prescription renewal, do they pay or is it covered in the doctor visit? Medication review paid by patient or covered in the doctor visit? Consultation regarding disease states, drug issues, paid by patient or covered by doctor visit? The public thinks of pharmacists as part of the Health Care Team and expects their services to be covered. Pharmacists are supposed to be part of the Health Care Team however, they cannot order blood tests, cannot get test results and are not always included in discussions regarding their role. Pharmacists have to fight to be included because the government does not want to reimburse pharmacists for their expertise/ don't want the expense? Not sure of the reasons, but pharmacists cannot continue to provide the services they do at a reduced rate of reimbursement. Pharmacists need to be paid Fair Fees for the services they do provide aside from prescription dispensing. If pharmacies are not sustainable and start closing, what will the state of our health care be in with a shortage of doctors and pharmacies?

When New Brunswick implements Fair Drug Prices, I hope it will be in conjunction with paying for Services provided by pharmacists such as NB Pharmacheck, Drug Injection Services, Immunization, Adaptation, etc and that the fees and agreements negotiated will recognize pharmacists' cost to operate and will have a transition time to allow pharmacists to change their practice to accommodate the changes. Pharmacists are willing to work with government in this cost savings endeavor as we have in the past. We have also raised points regarding 30 day Trial Prescriptions as we see so much waste due to adverse and allergic reactions. The unused medications that we see returned to pharmacies each year is astounding (another service we provide). Faster approval of generic drugs to decrease the cost base. Medication reviews to decrease the usage of prescription drugs (at an all time high) Allow pharmacists to request and review lab values which will allow us to prescribe, adapt and extend prescriptions without the expense of a doctor visit. Pharmacists want to be part of the Health Care Team and can provide valuable services that are readily accessible but we cannot continue to do so for free. No other health care provider renders their service without a fee attached. No other health care provider has their fee scrutinized so publicly and questioned so publicly. Fees in other provinces are higher than New Brunswick. Other provinces have markup which New Brunswick does not. Some provinces are being paid for the other services pharmacies offer. In New Brunswick the government needs to work with pharmacists to help work towards Fair Drug Prices but also Fair Fees for Services so New Brunswick pharmacies can survive to ensure the aging population has the pharmacy service it needs to live longer, healthier lives .

Sincerely

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