

Alberta Pharmacists Prescribing



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Under the Pharmacists' Profession Regulation, Alberta pharmacists who complete training approved by the Alberta College of Pharmacists will be able to write prescriptions for Schedule 1 medications (not including controlled substances) and vaccines. Initiating prescriptions would be phased in over time subject to pharmacists meeting additional requirements established by the College's council. The council has appointed an expert panel including pharmacists, physicians, nurses and a member of the public, to provide advice on the additional requirements.

Such a change in traditional roles has many stakeholders watching Alberta. To get an understanding of current attitudes, Prism Healthcare Intelligence recently checked the pulse of physicians in Alberta. This survey was completed in September 2006 by 150 Alberta-based physicians across a variety of specialties. The results are considered accurate to within ± 7.6 percentage points, 19 times out of 20 times.

Overall, only 10% of physicians in Alberta support the current legislation in Alberta allowing pharmacists to prescribe. This view was evenly shared among GPs and specialists (Table 1).

Most parties would agree that many of these pharmacy prescriptions will be renewals or amending dosages, *etc.* However, with advanced training, the pharmacist will also be able to initiate new scripts. This has physicians most concerned as only 9% believe that pharmacists will make the correct diagnosis over time (Figure 1).

Table 1

Physicians' opinion on Alberta legislation

Question: Will this legislation...	No	Yes
...reduce the number of patients you see?	71%	29%
...increase patient access to medication?	20%	80%
...limit the pharmacies you recommend to patients?	64%	36%
...create a better working relationship with pharmacists?	87%	13%
...increase medication errors?	21%	79%

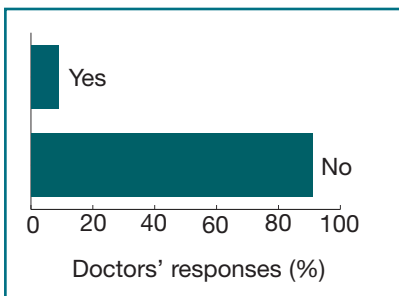


Figure 1. With proposed training, will pharmacists be able to make the correct diagnosis?

This program will be phased in over time. In order to participate, pharmacists will be required to undergo training by the College and follow requirements ensuring they are operating within their competency. When asked what therapeutic areas MDs are comfortable having pharmacists prescribe, physicians remained unsold, offering only traditional categories like over-the-counter medications, oral contraceptives and morning after pills.

This change has many potential benefits to the patient and I'm sure other provinces will be watching closely. Are pharma companies preparing for the pharmacist sample drop? **CPM**

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