



## **ACCESS TO MEDICINES FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**Q:** Why does Canada need evidence-based, comprehensive, pan-Canadian pharmacare standards?

**A:** Canadians currently experience drug access inequities across disease states, settings and jurisdictions. The development of comprehensive pan-Canadian pharmacare standards will ensure all Canadians have equitable access to prescription drug coverage and that treatment decisions will be made on the best-evidence available and respect an individual's choice based on need, not just cost.

**Q:** Why an Advisory Panel?

**A:** The previous government sun-setted the Health Council of Canada, which played an important role in monitoring and evaluating the Health Accord. In the absence of the council or a similar body, the federal government needs a forum to hear from Canadians and a broad range of stakeholders to provide their perspective on this critical issue.

**Q:** What would be the Advisory Panel's mandate?

**A:** The advisory panel's mandate would be to conduct a broad consultation with a wide range of stakeholders in order to develop comprehensive, evidence-based, pan-Canadian pharmacare standards. Once the consultation is complete and standards are established, the advisory panel will then be in a position to recommend the best model for implementing those standards.

**Q:** How much would the Advisory Panel cost?

**A:** We recommend establishing an advisory panel similar to the model used to establish the federal advisory panel on health care Innovation, which was estimated to cost \$750K—\$1M.

**Q:** What is meant by *comprehensive pan-Canadian standards*?

**A:** HCCC members want standards that address inequities in drug coverage and provide options for Canadians which respect an individual's right to choose a treatment based on need and the best evidence available.

**Q:** Are you aware that the Standing Committee on Health is going to do a study on pharmacare?

**A:** Yes, HCCC is thrilled this issue is recognized as a key priority area by the Government of Canada. HCCC has offered to provide testimony to the Standing Committee on Health on this issue and hopes to present our key concerns and recommendations when this study is conducted.

**Q:** Have you considered adding pharmacare to the Canada Health Act?

**A:** HCCC believes that once comprehensive standards for pharmacare are established, the Canada Health Act should be expanded to include prescription medication across jurisdictions, settings and disease states.

**Q:** Why should HCCC and its members be included in access to medicines discussions?

**A:** HCCC's membership represent the majority of Canadians affected by health issues and is well-positioned to identify gaps in pharmacare that need to be addressed, illustrate concrete issues related to access and inequities, develop data on health outcomes and provide constructive and thoughtful solutions.

**Q:** Why does HCCC advocate for a shared cost model for evidence-based, comprehensive, pan-Canadian pharmacare standards?

**A:** HCCC recommends the implementation of evidence-based, comprehensive pan-Canadian pharmacare standards be funded in part by the Government of Canada because we believe the federal government has a leadership role to play and a shared responsibility along with the provincial and territorial governments for the health and welfare of all Canadians.

**Q:** Where does Canada stand next to other OECD countries on access to medicines?

**A:** In a 2015 study of the top 18 OECD countries, ranked by highest GDP per capita, Canada ranked 17 out of 18, on access to medication. Between 2009 and 2013, 130 new therapies were launched in Canada, though only 23% of new medicines were reimbursed.<sup>1</sup>

**Q:** Does HCCC support the development of a national formulary?

**A:** HCCC would consider the development of a national formulary but are not advocating specifically for that solution. Currently, Canada has 46 public programs that are complex and varied, along with private payer models. HCCC is advocating the Government of Canada take a lead role in closing the gaps in pharmacare coverage by establishing an expert panel to recommend the best solution.

**Q:** Would HCCC support a “first dollar coverage” model?

**A:** HCCC believes the advisory panel would be the best positioned to identify the most efficient and effective pan – Canadian pharmacare model to ensure that no Canadian is left without prescription medication due to cost or barriers to access.

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<sup>1</sup> Access to new medicines in public drug plans: Canada and comparable countries 2015 annual report, retrieved from: [www.innovativemedicines.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/RxD\\_6580\\_AccessToMedicinesReport\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.innovativemedicines.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/RxD_6580_AccessToMedicinesReport_WEB.pdf)

**Q:** How many people in Canada currently have no drug coverage?

**A:** A recent survey reported that 38% of Canadians have no group insurance health coverage, 73% held no personal drug coverage policy and 20% of Canadians had neither insurance nor money saved for unexpected medical expenditure.<sup>2</sup>

**Q:** Do HCCC members support the shift from the hospital to the community setting?

**A:** Yes, HCCC supports shifting resources from acute care settings to community settings as it is both cost effective and improves the quality of life for Canadians. HCCC believes that given this shift in service delivery, it is more important than ever for all Canadians to have equitable access to prescription medication regardless of setting. Equitable access to medications will allow more Canadians to remain in their communities when addressing health issues.

**Q:** What can I do to support this request?

**A:** HCCC asks that all Members of Parliament support the establishment of an advisory panel to address access to medicines issues in the healthcare system through the development of evidence-based, comprehensive pan-Canadian pharmacare standards. Comprehensive standards will ensure all Canadians have equitable access to prescription drug coverage and that treatment decisions will be made on the best-evidence available, at the best price, respecting an individual's choice based on need.

**Q:** How will our recommendations affect drug shortages?

**A:** HCCC recommends that addressing drug shortages along with other access to medicines barriers be included in the access to medicines advisory panel's mandate.

**Q:** How does drug approval work in Canada?

**A:** HCCC has developed a comprehensive overview of the Canadian drug approval process in the "How To" Health Guide, which was developed to assist patients, caregivers, friends and families in managing information about the Canadian health care system. HCCC believes the patient voice should be included in the drug review process. HCCC's representative members can act as a conduit for all levels of government to reach Canadians for their feedback on the development, implementation, continual improvement of access to medicines policies and reform measures.

**Q:** How does HCCC feel about the Government of Canada's current participation in the pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance?

**A:** HCCC applauds the federal government's recent announcement to join with the provinces and territories to increase the negotiating power of public payers in Canada. Through collective negotiations, Canada can effectively reduce costs to the healthcare system, increase access and improve health outcomes for all Canadians.

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<sup>2</sup> Sun Life Health Index, (2013), retrieved from: [www.sunlife.ca/ca/Learn+and+Plan/Market+insights/Canadian+Health+index?vgnLocale=en\\_CA](http://www.sunlife.ca/ca/Learn+and+Plan/Market+insights/Canadian+Health+index?vgnLocale=en_CA)