

EQUITABLE PHARMACEUTICAL CARE

Principles and Considerations Regarding Pharmacare for All Canadians

ISSUE OVERVIEW

The current structure of prescription drug coverage for Canadians is a patchwork of drug programs, including public and private insurance, as well as direct payment by individuals. It is widely acknowledged that this framework has widespread inconsistencies and inequities, often resulting in compromised patient care and outcomes at great cost to individuals, the health care systems, and society as a whole. Canada is one of the few industrialized countries without a comprehensive program for medically necessary drugs available to all, and this lack of universality regarding drug coverage is a major shortfall for Canadian patients.

MOVING FORWARD

Many prominent organizations in all disciplines of health have called for significant reforms to ensure that all Canadians are able to receive the medications they need, often proposing implementation of what is referred to as a national pharmacare program, and sometimes using the term universal drug coverage. This Best Medicines Coalition position document presents core positions and fundamental principles that we find important for inclusion within any proposed models that strive to improve access to medications.

CORE POSITIONS

- No Canadian should be left without the means to obtain medicines that a qualified health care professional has deemed medically necessary.
- Canadians in all regions of the country, regardless of income, age, or type of medical condition, must be able to access, consistently and equitably, a comprehensive range of necessary medicines in a timely manner.
- Canadian national and regional leadership must prioritize equitable and comprehensive drug coverage for all Canadians and should strive for a cooperative approach to meaningful consultations and discussion.
- Patients, including the organizations that represent them, must play an integral role during review, debate, development, and integration of new pharmacare strategies and programs.

KEY PRINCIPLES AND CONSIDERATIONS:
WHAT IS NECESSARY TO MEET PATIENT NEEDS?

- UNIVERSALITY*** Prescription medications have become an essential part of many treatment regimes, with their potential to improve patient outcomes and save lives while bringing economic value to the health care system. All Canadians have a right to access medically necessary medications, and our programs must include this integral aspect of treatment in a consistent fashion across all jurisdictions.
- NATIONAL SCOPE*** A system for all Canadians to ensure equitable and consistent access to medicines must be national in scope, regardless of whether there is central administration or the current structure of provincial/territorial health care delivery. If delivered regionally, then pharmaceutical care must be portable throughout the country and national standards are required to ensure equity for all Canadians, no matter where they live.
- BROAD INCLUSIVITY*** There should be no limits placed on the types of conditions covered within any Canadian pharmacare program framework. All programs must be comprehensive and inclusive of all chronic, episodic, or acute conditions, regardless of incidence.
- THERAPEUTIC OPTIONS*** Canadians have a right to a high standard of pharmaceutical treatment, with access to a secure supply of a full array of approved medications, including both long-standing compounds and more recently approved advancements. Likewise, the concept of "the right medication at the right time" must be a central premise, enabling patients to benefit from those medications most appropriate for them.
- Programs must offer a range of medicines, which provide therapeutic options, so that treatment is not limited to a narrow selection of drugs within a particular class, since individual – even small – variations affect patient response and outcomes. Likewise, programs must be inclusive of all types of medication formats (e.g., oral, intravenous) and delivery systems.
- TIMELY ACCESS*** Extended wait times to receive medically necessary pharmaceutical treatments are unacceptable. Access delayed is access denied and so leaders must ensure that efficiency and timeliness be entrenched within any pharmacare framework including the review, assessment, and reimbursement processes.
- COLLABORATION*** Whether pursued nationally, in a pan-Canadian framework, or regionally, Canadians need significant pharmaceutical policy reform that involves full consultation with all stakeholders and careful consideration of options and implications. While this process is underway, decision-makers and drug program leaders have a responsibility to continue to use current policy, program, and budgetary options to address specific pharmacare challenges, which directly affect the lives of patients.

ABOUT THE BEST **MEDICINES COALITION**

The Best Medicines Coalition is a national alliance of patient organizations with a shared goal of equitable and consistent access for all Canadians to safe and effective medicines that improve patient outcomes. The Best Medicines Coalition's areas of interest include drug approval, assessment, and reimbursement issues, as well as patient safety and supply concerns. As an important aspect of its work, the Best Medicines Coalition strives to ensure that Canadian patients have a voice and are meaningful participants in health policy development, specifically regarding pharmaceutical care.

Finalized in 2015, the members of the Best Medicines Coalition together developed this document, *Equitable Pharmaceutical Care: Principles and Considerations Regarding Pharmacare for All Canadians*, and it represents areas of consensus among these member organizations.

BEST **MEDICINES COALITION MEMBERS**

ALLIANCE FOR ACCESS TO PSYCHIATRIC MEDICATIONS

ARTHRITIS CONSUMER EXPERTS

ASTHMA SOCIETY OF CANADA

BETTER PHARMACARE COALITION

BRAIN TUMOUR FOUNDATION OF CANADA

CANADIAN ARTHRITIS PATIENT ALLIANCE

CANADIAN BREAST CANCER NETWORK

CANADIAN COUNCIL OF THE BLIND

CANADIAN EPILEPSY ALLIANCE

CANADIAN HEMOPHILIA SOCIETY

CANADIAN PKU & ALLIED DISORDERS

CANADIAN PSORIASIS NETWORK

CANADIAN SKIN PATIENT ALLIANCE

CANADIAN SOCIETY OF INTESTINAL RESEARCH

CANADIAN SPONDYLITIS ASSOCIATION

CANADIAN TREATMENT ACTION COUNCIL

CANCER ADVOCACY COALITION OF CANADA

CROHN'S AND COLITIS CANADA

FOUNDATION FIGHTING BLINDNESS

GASTROINTESTINAL SOCIETY

HEALTH COALITION OF ALBERTA

KIDNEY CANCER CANADA

LYMPHOMA FOUNDATION CANADA

OVARIAN CANCER CANADA

PARKINSON SOCIETY CANADA

SAVE YOUR SKIN

TOURETTE CANADA