

Dear Ms. Schiefer:

Please accept this letter in full support of the Ontario Pharmacists' Association position that pharmacists would benefit from a greater scope of practice, including:

- The ability to refill chronic medications defined under a specified protocol
- Refill a patient's chronic medication on a one-time basis if the original prescriber is not available
- Order and receive laboratory tests, as needed, under defined protocols
- Monitor and adjust doses of chronic medications
- Adapt a prescription using professional judgement
- Initiate therapy for minor ailments from a set formulary
- Initiate therapy for travel prophylaxis and immunizations when needed
- Provide immunization services to patients, if necessary
- Assess, initiate, and monitor the most appropriate therapeutic approach for smoking cessation.

I currently work as a community pharmacist, as well as a clinical consultant pharmacist with a family health team. In addition, I maintain ties with hospital practice by filling in when required for vacation coverage. In this broad experience, I have come across a great number of situations where my ability to meet the needs of patients has been restricted by regulations that are out of date with my educational background and professional expertise.

On a daily basis, I am forced to send patients back to their physicians or a walk in clinic for things as simple as renewals for diabetic testing strips or blood pressure medications. In a society where we are often told that there is a "doctor shortage", why are we plugging up their offices with issues such as these which could easily be handled by a pharmacist.

As a practicing pharmacist in Niagara on the Lake, I often receive requests from tourists who have forgotten or not carried enough of their medication along with them. After turning them over to a doctor, we usually receive a request from the physician to identify the medications for them. Why not save the physician to manage more complicated cases, and allow pharmacists to deal with this type of issue, providing no additional health complications exist.

Pharmacists are medication management experts who are committed to providing the best health care possible in a patient-centred, collaborative environment. Over the years, the pharmacist's role has evolved to include responsibility not only for the procurement and dispensing of medications, but also for their safe and effective use by patients, the prevention of disease, and the promotion of health and wellness.

For many people, their pharmacist is the most visible and accessible health care provider - someone who can respond promptly to a patient's need for medication

or advice. As a pharmacist, I assess and refer patients to other health care providers, work with physicians to modify prescriptions, manage complex medication regimes from multiple prescribers, and provide primary care to patients who don't have a family physician. As the population ages and medication use increases, I am frequently called upon to intervene on my patients' behalf to ensure medication therapy is appropriate and patients adhere to treatment plans.

My ability to perform to my full potential is limited by regulations that have not kept up with the pharmacist's expanding role in patient care and education. For example, as part of current practice, patients and caregivers expect me to pierce a patient's finger to demonstrate how to use a lancing device for chronic care monitoring, administer medication such as insulin to demonstrate proper technique, and administer medication when teaching patients how to use inhalers.

Since pharmacy technicians will soon be regulated in Ontario and take on responsibility for the technical aspects of dispensing, pharmacists will have the opportunity to more effectively use their time, skills and knowledge.

Pharmacists are willing and able to play an important role in making Ontario's health care system more efficient and effective. To make the most of our accessibility and expertise as pharmacists, our scope of practice needs to expand so we have greater responsibility for prescribing decisions, and the tools we need to monitor drug therapy outcomes, to better meet the needs of Ontarians now and in the future.

Regards,

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