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I am writing to encourage you to make the changes necessary to allow Ontario Pharmacists' contribute to our health care system to our full potential.

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 medications 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.

In addition, there is a major shortage of doctors in our area, and patients routinely ask for care which is currently outside our defined scope of practice, but is well within my skill and knowledge.

I support the OPA's position that pharmacists should be able to refill chronic medications defined under a set protocol: refill a patient's chronic medication, order and receive laboratory tests, monitor and adjust doses of chronic medications, adapt a prescription, initiate therapy for minor ailments, initiate therapy for travel prophylaxis and immunizations, provide immunization services and assess, initiate and monitor the most appropriate therapeutic approach for smoking cessation.

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.

Scott Lane, Pharmacist
SEAWAY VALLEY PHARMACY

