

BC PHARMACARE NEWSLETTER

Edition 25-003: March 2025

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The PharmaCare Newsletter team works from the territory of the ləkʷəŋən People, known today as the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations. Our gratitude extends to them and all Indigenous Peoples on whose territories and lands we live and work.

BC PharmaCare counts on pharmacies and device providers to practice humility. To learn more, read Coming Together for Wellness, a series of articles by the First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) and PharmaCare, and consider taking the Saŋ'yas Indigenous Cultural Safety course.

The PharmaCare Newsletter is published by the Pharmaceutical, Laboratory & Blood Services Division to provide information to B.C.'s healthcare providers.

gov.bc.ca/pharmacies
gov.bc.ca/programs
gov.bc.ca/deviceproviders



Q: Should dry powder inhalers (DPIs) be avoided in people with severe chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)?

A: The answer is in the current edition of [PAD Refills](#). Make sure to [subscribe](#) so you don't miss out on news and updates!



B.C. signs national pharmacare agreement

The Honourable Josie Osborne, BC Minister of Health, and the Honourable Mark Holland, Canada's Minister of Health, announced on March 6, 2025, the signing of a pharmacare agreement to invest nearly \$670 million over four years to provide universal access to contraceptive and diabetes medications for residents. B.C. will also provide free access to HRT medication for treatment of menopausal symptoms. B.C. residents can anticipate beginning to receive coverage for these products in March 2026. Find the details on the federal news release, [Government of Canada signs pharmacare agreement with British Columbia to improve universal access to free medications](#).

[Subscribe](#) to the PharmaCare Newsletter so you do not miss updates and details about national pharmacare coverage.

Resources

- [Government of Canada signs pharmacare agreement with British Columbia to improve universal access to free medications](#)

[Article added March 16, 2025]

Ministry of Health seeking members for new pharmacy council

The Ministry of Health is seeking applications from front-line pharmacy professionals to form a pharmacy council. The 34-member council will act as an advisory body, providing feedback on pharmaceutical policy, practice topics, and patient/provider experience to support Ministry decision-making.

The council will include practising pharmacists and pharmacy technicians from across the province, working in a variety of practice settings and organization types. Members of the council will be remunerated for their participation. There will be least four virtual meetings annually.

Visit [Ministry of Health Pharmacy Council](#) to learn more. To apply to become a council member, submit the online [Pharmacy Council Application](#). Applications will be accepted until April 4, 2025, at 11:59 pm.

Ideal applicants:

- Practising pharmacists or pharmacy technicians, licensed in good standing with the College of Pharmacists of BC
- Minimum of three years' experience in pharmacy practice
- Enthusiastic about shaping the future of pharmacy practice in B.C.
- Do not currently belong to a committee or working group in direct communication with the Ministry of Health
- No conflict of interest, where personal or financial interest may influence input to the Pharmacy Council
- Experience on an advisory committee, working group or focus group

Resources

- [Ministry of Health Pharmacy Council](#)
- [Pharmacy Council Application](#)

New BC Registry application launches March 2025

[BC OnLine](#) is being replaced with the [BC Registry application](#). This month (March 2025), B.C. company incorporations and filings will move to the [BC Registry](#) application. Learn more at bcreg.ca/corporations.

Pharmacies will soon be able to add officer information to the BC Registry application. In the meantime, pharmacies are encouraged to file their officer information and/or update it voluntarily using [Schedule A: Owner Details \(PDF, 513KB\)](#).

PharmaCare has a provider enrolment requirement that subsidiary corporations that are not publicly traded and which have a parent corporation that is not publicly traded must provide the names and contact information of all officers and directors of the parent corporation.

Resources

- [BC Registries modernization initiative](#)
- [Schedule A: Owner Details \(PDF, 513KB\)](#)
- [BC Business Registry](#)

TI Letter: Avoid serotonergic antidepressants for people with alcohol and other substance use disorders

The Therapeutics Initiative (TI) recently published a Therapeutics Letter that reviewed the evidence, utilization and guideline recommendations for antidepressants in people with substance use disorders. Visit [Avoid serotonergic antidepressants for people with alcohol and other substance use disorders](#) to read the letter.

Resources

- [Therapeutics Initiative \[152\]: Avoid serotonergic antidepressants for people with alcohol and other substance use disorders](#)

Reminder: Physician assistant Practitioner ID code is M9

The College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC has begun registering physician assistants (PAs) to work under the direction of physicians in emergency departments in B.C. Pharmacies can expect prescriptions written by certified PAs.

The first two PAs in the province [started clinical shifts at Saanich Peninsula Hospital](#) emergency department on January 8, 2025, as part of a prototype project. In B.C., PAs work under a supervising emergency department physician. More hires are expected throughout the province.

The PharmaNet practitioner reference ID for certified PAs is **M9**. Pharmacists must enter the prescriber's 5-digit practitioner ID, last name, and enter or select the new practitioner reference ID (M9) for transactions to adjudicate correctly.

If your pharmacy management software does not include the reference ID for physician assistants (i.e., M9), please contact your software vendor.

Note that PAs are not authorized to prescribe narcotics or controlled substances. If a pharmacist believes that a prescription for a narcotic or controlled substance was written by a PA, they should not dispense the prescription.

Resources

- [Island Health Welcomes First Physician Assistants in B.C.](#)

March is Pharmacy Appreciation Month! #PAM2025

March is Pharmacy Appreciation Month (PAM), the annual national campaign that shines a spotlight on Canada's pharmacy professionals.

The contributions of our pharmacy teams, especially over the past few years, have been remarkable. From supporting communities through the pandemic to helping patients navigate care during Canada's primary care crisis, managing ongoing [drug shortages](#), and everything in between, pharmacy professionals are a key piece of Canada's health care system.

In B.C., [pharmacist scope of practice](#) continues to evolve as pharmacists take on additional roles and responsibilities such as:

- [Drug administration](#)
- [Adapting prescriptions](#)
- [Prescription renewal](#)
- [Prescribing for minor ailments and contraception](#)
- [Ordering lab tests](#)

An overview of the first year of data (June 1, 2023, to May 31, 2024) for pharmacists prescribing for minor ailments and contraception (PPMAC) is now available. Visit [Pharmacists Prescribing for Minor Ailments and Contraception \(PPMAC\) one-year overview \(PDF, 188KB\)](#) for the data overview.

Join the conversation on social media (#PAM2025) and take the time to thank and appreciate your pharmacy team and our broader pharmacy community. There are many ways to celebrate PAM. Visit [Pharmacy Appreciation Month](#) for more information.

Happy Pharmacy Appreciation Month!

Resources

- CPhA: [Pharmacy Appreciation Month \(PAM\)](#)
- CSHP BC Wednesday lunchtime presentation series: [Pharmacy Appreciation Month \(PAM\) 2025](#)
- BCPhA: [Pharmacy Appreciation Month](#)

Policy Spotlight: Plan Z

Plan Z

- 100% Coverage**
Full Payment Policy applies
- Universal**
B.C. residents enrolled in MSP have automatic coverage
- 80+ products**
 - COVID-19 and mpox treatments
 - MAiD, Mifegymiso
 - Contraceptives
 - Opioid agonist treatment (OAT)
- 237,000+ beneficiaries in 2024**
- Exceptional**
coverage available for some benefits

Equally available to everybody

gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/practitioner-professional-resources/pharmacare/plans/plan-z

Policy Spotlight: Plan Z

RAT kit payment update

Since the last newsletter, PharmaCare has paid pharmacies for COVID-19 rapid antigen test (RAT) kit distribution as follows:

Payment month	Payment date
December 2024	March 3, 2025

Pharmacies are paid \$75 for each case of RAT kits distributed, and pharmacists are reminded to enter the correct PIN for each case of RAT kits distributed.

- BTNX: 66128325
- Artron: 66128338

Resources

- [2024 PharmaCare Provider Payment Schedule \(PDF, 165KB\)](#)
- [2025 PharmaCare Provider Payment Schedule \(PDF, 120KB\)](#)

Formulary and listing updates

Limited Coverage benefits: Selumetinib (Koselugo™)

PharmaCare has added the following Limited Coverage item to the PharmaCare drug list. Special Authority approval is required for coverage.

Drug name	Selumetinib (Koselugo™)		
Date	February 12, 2025		
Indication	For the treatment of neurofibromatosis type 1 with symptomatic and inoperable plexiform neurofibromas in pediatric patients (aged 2 to under 18 years) who have symptomatic, inoperable plexiform neurofibromas, when requested by a neurooncologist or a pediatrician with expertise in neurooncology.		
DIN	02530139 02530147	Strength & form	10 mg capsule 25 mg capsule

Non-benefits: Brolucizumab (Beovu®)

PharmaCare has decided not to cover the following drug for the noted indication.

Drug name	Brolucizumab (Beovu®)		
Date	February 11, 2025		
Indication	Diabetic macular edema		
DIN	02496976	Strength & form	6 mg / 0.05 mL solution for intravitreal injection

Delisting: Vancomycin hydrochloride for injection USP

Effective March 6, 2025, PharmaCare is delisting vancomycin hydrochloride 5 g vial for injection.

Vancomycin 500 mg and 1 g vials for injection remain regular benefits. Oral vancomycin 125 mg and 250 mg capsules remain [limited coverage benefits](#).

Drug name	Vancomycin hydrochloride for injection USP		
Date	March 6, 2025		
Indication	The therapy of severe or life-threatening staphylococcal infections in patients who cannot receive or have failed to respond to the penicillins or cephalosporins, or who have infections with staphylococci resistant to other antibiotics, including methicillin.		
Manufacturer	Fresenius Kabi Canada Ltd.		
DIN	02139243	Strength & form	5 g vial, sterile lyophilized powder for solution

Your Voice: Input needed for drug decisions

The knowledge and experience of patients, caregivers and patient groups is integral to [B.C.'s drug review process](#). If you know someone who is taking one of the drugs below or who has a condition any of the drugs treat, please encourage them to visit www.gov.bc.ca/BCyourvoice.

Your Voice is now accepting input on the following drugs:

Drug	Indication	Input window
ruxolitinib (Opzelura®)	Nonsegmental vitiligo in adult and pediatric patients 12 years of age and older	February 26 to March 25 at 11:59 pm
guselkumab (Tremfya®)	Moderately to severely active ulcerative colitis in adults	February 26 to March 25 at 11:59 pm
bimekizumab (Bimzelx®)	Moderate to severe hidradenitis suppurativa (HS) in adults	February 26 to March 25 at 11:59 pm
teprotumumab (TBC)	Moderate to severe active thyroid eye disease (TED) in adults	February 26 to March 25 at 11:59 pm
teprotumumab (TBC)	Moderate to severe chronic thyroid eye disease (TED) in adults	February 26 to March 25 at 11:59 pm
trofinetide (Daybue™)	Rett syndrome (RTT) in adults and pediatric patients 2 years of age and older	February 26 to March 25 at 11:59 pm



Did you know?

Provincial Academic Detailing (PAD), which offers continuing education to pharmacists and other health professionals, was launched in 2008. Visit [About PAD service](#) to learn more about PAD. Read [PharmaCare Trends 2022-23 \(PDF, 1MB\)](#) for more PharmaCare facts.

Social prescriptions: A holistic approach to health in B.C.

B.C. health professionals are adopting innovative ways to improve population health through non-clinical prescriptions that complement traditional medical care.

Known as [social prescribing](#), physicians, nurses, pharmacists and other health professionals can “prescribe” activities and services that support social, emotional, and lifestyle factors – to reduce [social isolation](#), improve mental health, and enhance quality of life while decreasing reliance on medical interventions.

Bobbi Symes, director of Healthy Aging at BC United Way (BCUW) points out, “When you think about the social determinants of health – transportation, housing, food security – those aren’t things that can be treated by a traditional prescription.”

The BCUW recently completed a [successful three-year program](#) to expand Social Prescribing resources on the Lower Mainland. The BCUW is working with the Ministry of Health to expand from 20 programs in B.C. to over 100 by the end of 2026.

Examples of social prescriptions:

- Bereavement groups
- Free local tax clinics
- Community gardening
- [Disability Benefits Compass](#)
- Food bank/meal programs
- Assistance with discharge from hospital
- Peer support
- Social/community activities such as a book club or dance class

Social prescribing at pharmacies

Community pharmacies are increasingly recognized as a valuable setting for [social prescribing](#) due to their accessibility and growing role in public health. For pharmacists, social prescribing may improve collaboration with a wider network of health-related professions and contribute to a more integrated healthcare system.

Pharmacists may want to explore opportunities to integrate social prescribing in their clients' care plans and take notes to follow up on their progress.

Ways to get involved

- **Register as a prescriber for PaRx:** An initiative of the BC Parks Foundation, B.C.'s [PaRx](#) “park prescription” program supports healthcare professionals to prescribe nature. Patients can also find information and evidence on time in nature as a treatment for specific conditions
- **Write it on a prescription pad:** Studies suggest that [written prescriptions](#) are significantly more effective than verbal advice in motivating patients to make a change
- **Learn from communities leading the way in social prescribing:** Visit the [Pathways Community Service Directory](#) to explore social prescribing resources from communities such as the [Fraser Valley](#), [Vancouver](#) and [Nanaimo](#)
- **Bring art into healthcare spaces:** The [Arts on Prescription Field Guide \(PDF, 7.9MB\)](#) suggests incorporating arts-based experiences in healthcare settings. Pharmacies could display local artwork to enrich their space and support community artists

Resources

- [Social prescribing in pharmacies: What is it, does it work and what does it mean for Canadian pharmacies?](#)
- [The green prescription study: A randomized controlled trial of written exercise advice provided by general practitioners](#)
- [Arts on Prescription: A Field Guide for US Pharmacies \(PDF, 7.9MB\)](#)
- [Building the capacity of older adults and community: findings from a developmental evaluation of United Way British Columbia's social prescribing programs for older adults](#)
- [Register as a prescriber for PaRx](#)
- [Pathways Community Service Directory](#)
- [United Way BC Celebrates Social Prescribing Day: Empowering Seniors to Achieve Health and Happiness](#)