

Ontario Pharmacy Council – The Year In Review December 2006 – December 2007

Ontario has one of the most generous publicly funded drug programs in Canada, providing assistance to almost 2.2 million Ontarians who are on social assistance, receiving provincial disability coverage or who are 65 years and over. These publicly funded programs now account for \$3.8 billion annually or 10% of provincial spending on health care, compared to 8% ten years ago.

The government's challenge is to ensure the sustainability of the system. Acting on the recommendations of the Drug System Secretariat's system-wide review of Ontario's public drug programs, the Ontario government introduced a comprehensive package of reforms, including legislative, policy and regulatory changes that will improve Ontario's drug system by:

- Strengthening transparency and accountability
- Improving patient access to drugs
- Ensuring better value for money
- Promoting the appropriate use of drugs
- Rewarding innovation

The cornerstone of the government's plan is the *Transparent Drug System for Patients Act*, which received Royal Assent on June 20, 2006. The Act amended the *Ontario Drug Benefit Act* (ODBA) and the *Drug Interchangeability and Dispensing Fee Act* (DIDFA) to allow for the implementation of the Government's plan to create a stronger, more effective and transparent drug system in Ontario.

Giving Pharmacists a Greater Voice – Pharmacy Council

The Government's plan recognizes the significant role that pharmacists play in providing patient care, and enables the ministry to more fully utilize pharmacists' skills and experience. Specifically, the plan included a commitment to provide dedicated funding for pharmacists to use their clinical expertise to provide patient care

On November 7, 2006, the government announced Ontario's first Pharmacy Council. The Pharmacy Council, jointly chaired by a ministry representative and a pharmacy representative was established to provide expert advice - to the Executive Officer, Ontario Public Drug Programs and the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care - on the development of pharmaceutical policy .

During 2007, the Ontario Pharmacy Council has actively worked towards fulfilling its mandate in developing professional pharmacy services. The Council is pleased to report back on its first year results, including the landmark implementation of the *MedsCheck* program; and to present a look ahead to plans for 2008.

MedsCheck Program Phase I

During its first year, the main priority of the Pharmacy Council was to develop a professional services program that all community and out-patient pharmacists could provide to patients. The medication review became the primary service and evolved into the *MedsCheck* program. In April 2007, the government launched *MedsCheck*, a \$50 million program that provides Ontarians (who take three or more medications) with an opportunity to consult their pharmacist to review the medications they are taking and to ensure that they are taking the right medications at the right dose and at the right time.

On April 1, 2007 *MedsCheck* was made available to Ontario Drug Benefit recipients (one medication review per year). In July 2007, *MedsCheck* was expanded to include one medication review per year to all eligible Ontarians. The program expanded again in November 2007 to include "Follow-Up" *MedsChecks* when:

- A patient is discharged from hospital
- A pharmacist has documented the need for a visit
- A physician or nurse has requested it
- There is a planned hospital admission

In the *MedsCheck* medication review, the pharmacist compares what the physician has prescribed (e.g., drug name, drug strength and drug dosage etc.), to what the patient is actually taking including non-prescribed OTC's (over the counter) and natural products. The goals of the review are to:

- Create and maintain an accurate record of what medication(s) the patient is taking. The record is intended to be a complete list of the patient's prescription, over-the-counter, and natural/homeopathic medications.
- Investigate and correct the discrepancies between physician orders and what the patient is taking.
- Minimize potential adverse events and medication errors

Through *MedsCheck*, residents of Ontario can spend quality time with their pharmacists, finding out more about the medications they take, asking questions and discussing any concerns. So far, 153,537 Ontarians have received *MedsCheck* reviews. *MedsCheck* also ensures that pharmacists are recognized and paid for their professional counselling services. Approximately 98 % of all pharmacies have participated in *MedsCheck*.

MedsCheck claims are processed online through the ministry's Health Network System (HNS), at a rate of \$50 per review per eligible person, once per year and \$25 per "Follow-up" *MedsCheck*. A one-time payment of \$950 was provided to the pharmacy along with the pharmacy's first *MedsCheck* claim. The one-time payment was to support pharmacies in transitioning to this service.

The ministry profiled this initiative and the Pharmacy Council in several pharmacy trade publications.

***MedsCheck* Phase II: Expanding Professional Pharmacy Services**

As the Pharmacy Council moves forward towards professional services that involve more in-depth collaboration with other health care professionals, the *Working Group on Pharmacists' Professional Services* – was formed to make recommendations to the Executive Officer and to provide physician input to the Pharmacy Council's future initiatives.

The *Professional Services Working Group* includes representatives from the Ontario Public Drug Programs (MOHLTC), Primary Care Health Team (MOHLTC), Ontario Pharmacy Council, Ontario Pharmacists' Association (OPA), Ontario Medical Association, Canadian Society of Hospital Pharmacists and a Faculty of Pharmacy in Ontario.

In addition, a *Long-Term Care (LTC) Working Group* was developed to examine the pharmacists' professional services offered to LTC Homes. The LTC Working Group includes representatives from the Ontario Public Drug Programs, the Ontario Pharmacy Council, the OPA LTC Working Group, a LTC physician, and five LTC pharmacist practitioners.

Summary of Pharmacy Council Achievements: December 2006 to December 2007

The Pharmacy Council has achieved numerous targets in order to fulfill its primary mandate of establishing a professional pharmacist services program to better patient care. Performance in respect to these targets is indicated in table 1.

Table 1 Year One Achievement

Target	Achievements
Establish Infrastructure for Pharmacy Council by Fall 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Legislation received royal assent accommodating the formation of a Pharmacy Council, June 2006 ▪ Pharmacy Council Terms of Reference defined, October 2006 ▪ Pharmacy Council membership confirmed and co-chairs appointed, November 2006 ▪ First meeting of Pharmacy Council, December 13, 2006; meetings held monthly thereafter
Implement pharmacist's professional services program (<i>MedsCheck</i> Phase I) by April 1, 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Established fundamental programs geared towards better patient outcomes, that is, medication reconciliation, adherence education, and/or intervention, compliance tools and follow-up, January 2007 ▪ Pharmacists, patient and public communication plan identified, February 2007 ▪ <i>MedsCheck</i> Guidebook for pharmacists published and distributed to Ontario pharmacies, March 2007 ▪ <i>MedsCheck</i> program launched in Ontario for Ontario Drug Benefit recipients, April 1, 2007 ▪ <i>MedsCheck</i> update and Frequently Asked Questions sent to Ontario Pharmacists and posted on ministry website, May 2007
Expand Phase I <i>MedsCheck</i> to all Ontarians by July 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>MedsCheck</i> program expansion - offered to all Ontarians, July 17, 2007 ▪ News Conference, July 17, 2007 ▪ Ministry Media Campaign to educate the public about the <i>MedsCheck</i> program – Radio/ TV commercials, posters, pamphlets, magazine profiling, July 30 to September 9, 2007 ▪ <i>MedsCheck</i> website launched www.medscheck.ca ; <i>MedsCheck</i> posters and forms sent to all Ontario pharmacies, July 2007 ▪ According to Ipsos Reid polls in June and September 2007, the Media Campaign was successful in increasing awareness of <i>MedsCheck</i> with members of the public
Expand Phase I to include “Follow-Up” <i>MedsCheck</i> by November 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>MedsCheck</i> expansion of professional services - The “Follow-up” <i>MedsCheck</i> implemented to accommodate patients who require a second <i>MedsCheck</i> within the annual time-frame, November 30, 2007.
Develop Phase II <i>MedsCheck</i> Expansion infrastructure by Fall 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Three levels of Professional Services categories defined by Pharmacy Council ▪ Pharmacy Council developed a specialized working group to assist in the expansion of professional services to patients in Long-Term Care (LTC) homes, August 2007 ▪ A working group on Pharmacists' Professional Services was developed to provide advice to the Executive Officer on communication, collaborative practice models, program details and deliverables as they relate to stakeholder groups.

Looking Forward to 2008

Pharmacy Council achievements for 2008 include the continued development and expansion of more in-depth pharmacists' professional services **programs** that fulfill the collaborative care model. Pharmacy Council is considering advice to include hospital practice and possibly individual pharmacist's professional billing options as it develops its professional services programs. In addition, the Council may be asked to give advice on an intervention program using *MedsCheck* (or other processes) that may include strategies to address narcotic abuse in Ontario.

In **collaboration** with other health care professionals, disease group associations and health organizations, Pharmacy Council will examine programs and provide advice to the ministry on several fronts, including the role of pharmacists in the province's pandemic planning.

The Pharmacy Council will provide input into the ministry's ongoing **communication** strategies for *MedsCheck* and the ongoing profiling of pharmacists' professional services. The government is expanding community living options for seniors over the next three years in an Aging at Home Strategy and the Pharmacy Council may be asked to provide advice in this regard.

Pharmacy Council will provide advice to ministry on **education programs for** pharmacists, other health care professionals, stakeholder groups and the public in building awareness of best practices for best possible patient outcomes. This strategy involves chronic disease management programs, such as diabetes, and public education by pharmacists who are working in collaboration with other health care professionals for better patient outcomes. This strategy also includes outreach programs and educational opportunities for pharmacists who may require guidance and assistance in the provision of professional services.

In addition, Pharmacy Council will offer continued guidance regarding **evaluation** to identify and implement the effectiveness of pharmacists' professional services.

Pharmacy Council

The mandate of the Pharmacy Council is to make recommendations to the ministry as follows:

- build and sustain a strong positive working relationship between the Government of Ontario and the pharmacy profession;
- identify opportunities for pharmacists to provide professional services and to recommend a compensation model for the provision of those services. This includes initiatives within a community or hospital outpatient pharmacy setting and within the primary care sector. The Council will recommend to the Ministry roles and responsibilities, training and accreditation needs and other supports as required;
- actively promote the adoption of the “Code of Conduct” referenced in subsection 11.5 (10.4) of the *Ontario Drug Benefit Act*, and across all pharmacy practices in Ontario;
- consider possible compensation models for specialized pharmacy practice;
- advise on the appropriate role of pharmacists within the health care system, including in primary care models, and advise on ways to enhance the quality and effectiveness of pharmacy services provided to Ontarians;
- consider any other matter referred to it jointly by the Ontario Pharmacists’ Association and the Ministry
- advise the Ministry within a timeframe set by the Executive Officer.

Membership

The Council consists of up to 12 members who are appointed by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Two of the members will be Co-Chairs, one a representative of the Ontario Pharmacists' Association, and the other a representative of the Ministry. Interim Co-Chairs were appointed at the discretion of the Minister. The Council may recommend to the Minister the appointment of full or ex officio members, with expertise in public policy, medicine and/or health economics or who possess other expertise deemed desirable. Applicants for future members are submitted through the Public Appointments Secretariat at: www.pas.gov.on.ca

Pharmacy Council Members include:

Founding Members 2006 – 2007	Members 2007 - 2008
Co-Chairs	
<p>Helen Stevenson, Executive Lead, Drug System Secretariat</p> <p>Marc Kealey, Chief Executive Officer, Ontario Pharmacists' Association,</p>	<p>Helen Stevenson, (Interim) Assistant Deputy Minister / Executive Officer, Ontario Public Drug Programs</p> <p>Janet McCutcheon, (Interim) Woits Pharmacy, Thunder Bay, ON</p>
Members	
<p>Robin Brown, Family Health Team, Guelph, ON</p> <p>Russell Cohen, Katz Group Canada Ltd., Mississauga, ON</p> <p>Antony Gagnon, Hamilton Family Health Team, Hamilton, ON</p> <p>Dr. Paul Gibb, Family Physician, Sudbury ON</p> <p>Wayne Hindmarsh, Leslie Dan Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON</p> <p>Mark Kearney, Prescription Shop, Ottawa, ON</p> <p>Janet McCutcheon, Woits Pharmacy, Thunder Bay, ON</p> <p>Karen Philp, Canadian Diabetes Association, Toronto, ON</p> <p>Garry Simard, Fenlon's Pharmacy, Wawa, ON</p> <p>Carmine Stumpo, Toronto East General Hospital, Toronto, ON</p>	<p>Robin Brown, Family Health Team, Guelph, ON</p> <p>Russell Cohen, Katz Group Canada Ltd., Mississauga, ON</p> <p>Antony Gagnon, Hamilton Family Health Team, Hamilton, ON</p> <p>Dr. Paul Gibb, Family Physician, Sudbury ON</p> <p>Wayne Hindmarsh, Leslie Dan Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON</p> <p>Vacancy</p> <p>Vacancy</p> <p>Karen Philp, Canadian Diabetes Association, Toronto, ON</p> <p>Garry Simard, Fenlon's Pharmacy, Wawa, ON</p> <p>Carmine Stumpo, Toronto East General Hospital, Toronto, ON</p>
Ex-officio Members	
<p>Brent Fraser, Director, Drug System Secretariat</p> <p>Deanna Williams, Registrar, Ontario College of Pharmacists</p>	<p>Brent Fraser, Director, Drug Program Services</p> <p>Anne Resnick, Director, Ontario College of Pharmacists</p>

Meetings

Pharmacy Council meetings are scheduled monthly and began in December 2006. Meeting summaries can be accessed on the ministry's Ontario Public Drug Programs website.