
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health Services

PROVINCE AND PHARMACISTS SIGN DRUG AGREEMENT

VICTORIA – Savings of up to \$29 million are anticipated in the first year of changes to PharmaCare prices for new generic drugs and the introduction of a pharmacy frequent-dispensing policy. The savings will be reinvested in other pharmaceutical initiatives to benefit patients.

In an agreement between the Province of British Columbia and the BC Pharmacy Association (BCPhA), new terms have been reached on the implementation of recommendations on drug procurement and new patient care options, from the Pharmaceutical Task Force Report released to government earlier this year.

“Achieving savings in our billion-dollar PharmaCare program will allow us to reinvest in new and emerging pharmaceutical products and practices,” said Health Services Minister George Abbott. “The changes support our commitment to the development of more transparent and accountable pharmaceutical policies with the benefits and savings passed on to British Columbians.”

Starting Jan. 1, 2009, the Province and the BCPhA will implement an interim policy for the pricing and reimbursement of new multi-source generic drugs. The change means that the reimbursement provided by the Province to pharmacists for PharmaCare beneficiaries for new generic drugs will not exceed 50 per cent of the price of the equivalent brand name drug. The reduction in PharmaCare reimbursements to pharmacies will not result in any additional costs for patients.

The new dispensing policy will be implemented Feb. 1, 2009. This new approach to payment fees for frequent dispensing of drugs will generate \$20 million in savings. Patients will not experience any difference in the way they receive their prescriptions.

“We are pleased with the changes, which are in line with clinical best practice guidelines and maintain the role of pharmacies and pharmacists,” said Marnie Mitchell, CEO of the BCPhA. “Pharmacist expertise can be used to a greater and more convenient, cost-effective advantage for British Columbians.”

Based on initial estimates, around \$9 million of the savings will be used to fund government’s throne speech commitment to enable patients to get their prescriptions renewed or adapted by their pharmacist starting in the New Year without having to see their physician.

“Today’s announcement is another step forward in strengthening the Province’s PharmaCare program,” said Don Avison, chair of the Pharmaceutical Task Force. “The recommendations outlined in our report to government are intended to guide the evolution of pharmaceutical policy in British Columbia.”

The government accepted all 12 of the recommendations of the Pharmaceutical Task Force earlier this year. With these new changes in place, the government has now completed several recommendations, including an annual meeting commitment and seeking three public members for the Drug Benefit Council. The Province will continue to work with stakeholders on implementation of other task force recommendations.

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