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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Attention: Health/Lifestyle Section Editors

Alberta pharmacists challenge drug dispenser stereotype

Edmonton, AB – “Pharmacists can help you more than you know” is the Alberta Pharmacists’ Association’s (RxA) theme for this year’s Pharmacist Awareness Week, March 6 to 12. RxA is continuing efforts to increase public awareness that a pharmacist is a vital member of any patient’s primary health care team and more than simply a drug dispenser.

RxA’s goal this year is to educate the public and other health care providers about how pharmacists’ training and qualifications far exceed that required by the role typically performed on a daily basis, that pharmacists have as much expertise in the prescribing of medication as doctors, and how pharmacists’ enhanced involvement in primary health care would potentially benefit all Albertans.

“One of the significant misunderstandings about pharmacy practice we’ve faced recently concerns a pharmacist’s ability and authority to collect information from clients purchasing over-the-counter medication,” said RxA CEO Barry Cavanaugh.

“We are working hard to educate people about the fact that when pharmacists are dispensing over-the-counter medications, specifically Schedule 2 drugs, they are actually *prescribing* them, as would a doctor, and have long had the training, legal authority and responsibility to do so.”

RxA, in conjunction with the Alberta College of Pharmacists, is asking for changes to the Health Professions Act (HPA) and the Pharmacy and Drug Act (PDA) that would, among other things, give Alberta pharmacists the legal right to prescribe other kinds of medicine, including some Schedule 1 drugs.

“Pharmacists are the true drug experts and, in the interest of optimal patient care and efficiency, it doesn’t make sense that they can’t prescribe certain kinds of medicine when so many other professions can,” added Cavanaugh.

Alberta pharmacists are on the leading edge of pioneering an expanded scope of practice as an increasing number are utilizing the full breadth of their highly-refined skill sets. Some examples of expanded scope of practice include: increased prescribing authority; structured medication reviews; working with other health professionals in primary care networks; medication management for disease states such as anti-coagulation therapy/diabetes/asthma; and the overall development of clinical services.

RxA was launched in 2000 as the professional advocacy body and voice for Alberta pharmacists. Representing more than 2,500 pharmacists throughout the province, RxA’s mission is, through leadership and advocacy, to promote and support the value of pharmacists as primary health care providers.

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