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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Attention: Health/General News Editors

RxA concerned about doctors' view on prescribing authority

Edmonton, AB – The Alberta Pharmacists' Association (RxA) today expressed concerns about recent comments made by the Alberta Medical Association (AMA) and the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta (CPSA) regarding upcoming changes to the Health Professions Act (HPA) that will enable pharmacists to prescribe some medications.

"RxA is gravely concerned about how the AMA and CPSA have called into question the professionalism of Alberta pharmacists in comments made to their members and in the media, and the impact that may have on the public trust of pharmacists. The public has every reason to trust that their health and safety will be respected and protected by Alberta pharmacists," said RxA CEO Barry Cavanaugh.

"Alberta pharmacists are sworn and required by law to do what is in the best interest of the patient. Government's recognition of their professionalism, qualifications and competency comes at a critical time in health reform. Alberta pharmacists are the true medication experts and, thanks to the upcoming regulations change to the Health Professions Act (HPA), are finally being given the opportunity to do what they are trained and qualified to do," said Cavanaugh.

"We do, however, believe that the average physician understands what pharmacists bring to the primary health care equation and are prepared to continue to work together in a spirit of collaboration as many have up till now. Pharmacists' goal is not to supplant physicians' role in primary health care, but to complement it," said Cavanaugh.

RxA is also concerned about AMA's speculation that a conflict of interest exists in Alberta pharmacists wanting prescribing authority due to commercial interests.

"Alberta pharmacists sought prescribing authority not for commercial interests, but to better serve individual clients and to make a meaningful contribution to enhance a sustainable health care system in Alberta," said Cavanaugh. "They simply want to do what they are trained to do – to safely and conscientiously work with patients to better meet their health care needs."

Cavanaugh added, "For Alberta pharmacists, life before prescribing authority has been like being given a pair of perfectly-functional limbs and being told, 'you can look at and think about those limbs, but you can't use them to walk.'"

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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