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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Attention: Health/General News Editors

Alberta pharmacists' survey says majority will prescribe

Edmonton, AB – A member opinion survey recently conducted by the Alberta Pharmacists' Association (RxA) revealed that the majority of RxA members will prescribe medication when changes to the Health Professions Act (HPA) and Pharmacy and Drug Act (PDA) come into force on April 1, 2007. The survey was sponsored by TD Meloche Monnex.

Prescribing authority

According to the survey results, 70 per cent of members surveyed said they would prescribe, 19 per cent said they didn't know, and only 11 per cent said they wouldn't prescribe.

"This result confirms what we've known all along about our membership: that the vast majority of members are ready, willing and able to embrace the new prescribing authority," said RxA deputy CEO Cam Johnston.

"Those who said they didn't know are likely uncertain of the implications this has for them and their pharmacies in daily practice. Of the small percentage that said they would not prescribe, the primary reasons were that they believed they needed further training, and that they did not wish to expand their practice. RxA will be working with all member pharmacists to ensure they receive the support they need to utilize the skills they've had all along, and for which they already have comprehensive training," said Johnston.

Approximately one-third of members surveyed said that having prescribing authority will allow them to serve their clients better, and another third said it will enable them to make more use of their drug therapy training.

Public perception

More than half of RxA members surveyed do not feel that pharmacists are viewed by patients as equal to other health care professionals such as medical doctors.

"RxA believes this perception will ultimately shift and pharmacists will be viewed appropriately -- as health professionals working at a peer level in collaboration with other health care professionals such as doctors and nurses," added Johnston. "The stigma of being viewed as simply a 'drug dispenser' is destined to diminish."

Service fees

Of members surveyed, 70 per cent do not currently charge their clients service fees. Less than a quarter charge for influenza vaccinations, and only seven per cent charge for diabetes management clinics.

However, almost 90 per cent of members surveyed said it's important they are paid for time spent providing patients with special clinical services.

"RxA is currently working on negotiations with government and other insurers to ensure that pharmacists are properly compensated for clinical services they have been and will continue to provide, and that those services are covered by insurance plans," said Johnston.

Services provided/client expectations

Of members surveyed, 85 per cent said they currently spend time on researching patient questions, and almost 70 per cent said they spend time on medication management and advising physicians of any changes to patients' prescriptions.

Regarding daily tasks on which they would like to spend more time, 53 per cent of members surveyed said medication management, 51 per cent said diabetes management clinics and consultations, and 46 per cent structured medication reviews.

In terms of client expectations, 90 per cent of members surveyed believe their clients expect them to fill prescriptions, and 88 per cent to provide clients with advice on which drug to take. However, 78 per cent believe their clients expect them to intervene with physicians when necessary.

"This latter result attests to the vital but 'unofficial' role pharmacists already play on behalf of clients in consulting with physicians on potential drug issues such as interactions," said Johnston.

Almost 60 per cent of members surveyed currently provide clinical services, and approximately one-third provide structured medication reviews, diabetes management, disease management clinics. Less than one-third provide influenza vaccinations and asthma management.

Administration of drugs by injection

More than a quarter of members surveyed indicated that they would administer drugs by injection as of April 1, 2007. One-third said they didn't know, and 41 per cent said they wouldn't.

"This comes as no surprise given that, while pharmacists receive physiological and anatomical training, some still require actual training in administering the injection itself. RxA is offering continuing education sessions in the specific interest of advancing pharmacists' skills in this area," said Johnston.

Pharmacy influences

An overwhelming majority of members surveyed (95 per cent) said that the public have influence on the direction of their pharmacies, and almost 90 per cent said insurance companies have influence.

Tobacco sales

The majority of members surveyed (84 per cent) believe that the sale of tobacco products should be prohibited in premises which contain a pharmacy.

Pharmacists' profile

Approximately half of members surveyed have practiced pharmacy for more than 15 years, and more than two-thirds are community pharmacists.

To view the entire RxA Member Opinion Survey Results, go to: www.albertapharmacy.ca

RxA was launched in 2000 as the professional advocacy body and voice for Alberta pharmacists. Representing more than 2,100 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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