

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians Embracing Expanded Role of Pharmacists

Abacus Data survey shows trust in profession, strong support for true universal flu shot program

March 9, 2016 (St. John's) Newfoundlanders and Labradorians like their pharmacists and support the expanded role pharmacists play in delivering needed health care services, including flu shots and treatment of common ailments.

A new national survey that included a sample of 500 NL residents by Abacus Data, released today, found that nearly all residents (97%) of the province have a positive impression of their pharmacists and say pharmacists have a key role in the health care system. With respect to flu immunization, 92% support a program where residents can receive their flu shot without paying a fee, regardless of whether it takes place in a physician office, health care clinic or pharmacy. In addition, 81% support government funding for costs for patients to see a pharmacist for assessment and treatment for common ailments.

“Newfoundland and Labrador residents clearly support the expanding role of pharmacists in health care delivery,” said Stephen Green, President of the Pharmacists’ Association of Newfoundland and Labrador (PANL). “They also overwhelmingly support a funding framework for pharmacists to deliver flu shots and to assess and prescribe for minor ailments, instead of the current system which forces patients to pay out of pocket.”

In November, Premier Ball responded to a question by PANL that the current system for flu vaccinations is illogical. Currently, flu vaccines delivered in pharmacies are not funded except for clients of the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program but the delivery of flu vaccines in physician offices and health clinics is funded for all residents. Premier Ball: “We believe the double standard as it exists now in flu vaccination coverage lacks logic. The current policy diverts people from accessing their pharmacist for this service, which is counterintuitive to optimizing scopes for savings and improved access.”

Dr. Carlo Marra, Dean of Memorial’s School of Pharmacy, has significant research expertise in health economics and commented on the need to increase flu vaccination rates in the province.

“Higher coverage is necessary for herd immunity and economic evaluations in Canada show universal vaccination programs are cost-effective by avoiding hospital admissions and emergency visits,” said Dr. Marra.

A strong majority of NL residents aged 18 and older (85%) who responded to the Abacus Data poll agreed that allowing pharmacists to do more for patients will reduce costs in the health care system, while 81% agreed that it would improve health outcomes.

“Pharmacists in our province want to be part of the solution to putting our healthcare system on a more sustainable footing,” said Glenda Power, PANL’s Executive Director. “Not only does the evidence show that a true universal flu shot program, as one example, will create efficiencies and improve health outcomes, we now know that the people of the province overwhelmingly support the Provincial Government in removing the barrier of a fee for flu shots in pharmacies.”

The Abacus Data survey on perceptions and attitudes about pharmacists and pharmacy services was conducted online with a representative sample of 3,824 Canadians aged 18 and older, including 500 residents of Newfoundland and Labrador. The survey was completed February 19 to February 25, 2016 by Abacus Data and was representative of the population in NL.

Survey results can be viewed here: [Abacus Data Survey Results](#)

PANL is the voice of pharmacists, with membership including 740 pharmacists, over 160 pharmacy students and 150 pharmacies. PANL advocates for pharmacists as health care team members integral to the effective and efficient delivery of health services in Newfoundland and Labrador.

-30-

Media Contacts:

Glenda Power
Executive Director
Pharmacists’ Association of Newfoundland and Labrador gpower@panl.net
709-753-7881
709-770-3833

Heidi Wicks
Communications Coordinator
School of Pharmacy, Memorial University wicksh@mun.ca
709-777-7302
709-749-7462