



Internal piece to members:

February is heart month in Canada and pharmacists are uniquely positioned, as frontline care providers, to play a key role in promoting heart health!

Did you know...heart disease is the second leading cause of death in Canada? Furthermore, nine in ten Canadians have at least one risk factor for heart disease and stroke. To this end, there are a lot of things that pharmacists can do to help prevent its occurrence or minimize the complications that may arise from established heart disease. Pharmacists can help patients recognize their risks and work collaboratively with other healthcare providers to optimize medications for best heart health.

Heart disease includes many diverse conditions that often require treatment with lots of different medications. Some of the main contributors to the development of heart disease include hypertension, diabetes, and dyslipidemia. If either is left untreated or undertreated, they can progress to serious and potentially fatal outcomes, including but not limited to a heart attack, stroke, or heart failure. Pharmacists can help manage these conditions by screening prescriptions for appropriateness, including appropriate choice of agent and dose, or by performing medication reviews. Here are some examples of recommendations made by pharmacists to optimize medication therapy and improve health outcomes for patients:

- Titration of a patient's basal insulin to achieve target fasting glucose levels
- Initiation of a moderate intensity statin (e.g., rosuvastatin 10 mg po once daily) in a patient with type 1 diabetes who is now 40 years of age
- Split dosing of an ACE-inhibitor (e.g., enalapril 20 mg po BID) for a patient who is experiencing fluctuations in blood pressure throughout the day

Pharmacists also help patients identify their modifiable risks for heart disease. For example, pharmacists in this province engage in prescribing smoking cessation therapies to help patients kick the habit, providing counseling and support on a daily basis. [As research has shown, smoking cessation is one of the most effective strategies for reducing the risk of heart disease and stroke.](#)

Medications used for heart conditions have a wide variety of adverse effects that may jeopardize patient safety if they are not used appropriately or avoided in certain patient populations. Some of these are well known in the medical community, such as avoiding ACE inhibitors in patients with angioedema. That said, prescribers might not be aware of other important medication characteristics. Pharmacists work collaboratively with other healthcare providers to ensure patient safety by recommending changes to administration and monitoring parameters that are essential to optimal cardiac medication use. Examples here may include:

- The need to remove a nitroglycerin patch for at least 10 hours per day to prevent nitrate tolerance; or
- the need to monitor for constipation in patients taking verapamil, especially older adults.

Together, the pharmacist and patient can ensure heart health.

Join PANL in promoting the ways pharmacists can offer heart health services by sharing our social media graphics:

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