



Role of NL Pharmacies and Pharmacists in COVID-19 Vaccinations

As Canada embarks on the largest and most complex vaccination campaign in history, it must ensure that it engages all trained immunizers in order to equitably and swiftly meet the needs of 37 million Canadians.

Community pharmacy is a key solution to supporting effective, equitable and efficient COVID-19 vaccination at all stages of deployment.

- Pharmacists are one of the most trusted health care providers and the first and most frequent touch point most patients have with the health care system.
- Once the highest priority individuals are immunized and more vaccines with broader stability ranges are approved, pharmacies and pharmacists will have an additional role as integral immunizers to reach herd immunity.

With governments developing their respective vaccine distribution plans to target specific populations, and eventually the roll out of mass immunization campaigns, Canada's 42,500 pharmacists and 11,000 pharmacies across the country are ready to play their part in delivering COVID-19 vaccines to the millions of Canadians, alongside many of our health provider colleagues.

The Pharmacists' Association of Newfoundland and Labrador (PANL) has expressed to government NL's pharmacies readiness to become involved. NL pharmacists, along with other healthcare providers, must be part of this significant undertaking to ensure the health and wellbeing of all residents.

WHY PHARMACIES AND PHARMACISTS?

- **Access and convenience:**
 - Pharmacies are located in all areas of this province, including rural and remote areas, with many open evenings and weekends. Newfoundland and Labrador's over 700 pharmacists, located in more than 200 pharmacies, are ideally situated to play a key role in the vaccination process.
- **Pharmacies have the healthcare expertise and infrastructure to deliver large scale vaccination campaigns.**
 - NL Pharmacists are authorized to administer a broad range of vaccines and have been instrumental in delivering the province's influenza campaign. As of December 17, 2020, there were 223,849 reported influenza vaccinations in NL: 88,405 of those by pharmacists (approx. 40%). Clearly, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians see their local pharmacy as a convenient and safe location to receive vaccinations.
- **Pharmacies are already prepared for COVID-19 vaccine distribution and delivery**
 - Pharmacies have already invested in the infrastructure and processes necessary to administer vaccines safely during the COVID-19 pandemic, including PPE protocols and training, disinfection and cleaning procedures, screening procedures to identify COVID-19 symptoms, appointment booking procedures, and appropriate spacing within pharmacies to ensure safe distancing for patients and staff.
- **Residents want and expect to get vaccinated at their community pharmacy**
 - According to a recent Abacus survey, 43% of Canadians chose pharmacy as the top location to receive a COVID-19 vaccination, compared to 42% favouring a physician's office and 14% a public health clinic
 - 81% of Canadians highly trust their pharmacists and regard the pharmacy as a safe place to get a vaccine.

- **Pharmacists can increase immunization and adherence rates for multi dose vaccines, which will be critical to reaching herd immunity.**
 - Pharmacists have established experience in administering multi-dose regimens and have been shown to increase immunization and adherence rates for shingles, HPV and hepatitis vaccines.
 - Community pharmacists regularly track, monitor and communicate with patients via the refill interval functions in their pharmacy management systems.

- **Pharmacies can manage storage and handling requirements.**
 - Pharmacists and pharmacies are able to manage complex storage and handling requirements for medications and vaccines, which will be essential in the campaign. All pharmacies are equipped with refrigerators that meet cold chain requirements.

- **Pharmacies have the infrastructure to collect data that will be critical to the success of a large scale COVID-19 vaccination program.**
 - Key information on every patient who receives a vaccine in a pharmacy is captured digitally and is automatically transmitted to provincial drug programs.

PANL RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Leverage all possible immunizers in the vaccine roll out to ensure all residents are vaccinated as swiftly as possible.**
 - All available immunizers will be required to effectively execute this monumental task.

- **Provide the necessary supplies necessary for pharmacists to immunize residents.**
 - Public stockpiles of supplies (i.e. syringes, alcohol swabs, bandages, PPE, etc.) should include allocation to pharmacies. Given the global nature of the pandemic, these critical supplies are in high demand and may be difficult to access by smaller pharmacies.

- **Vaccinate pharmacists as essential front-line health care workers.**
 - As immunizers, pharmacists and frontline pharmacy staff should be immunized prior to the launch of any broad vaccination campaign in pharmacies.

- **Ensure a vaccine administration fee that reflects the added time and complexity of administration and education related to this novel vaccine.**
 - Administering this vaccine will require additional work above and beyond influenza campaigns. Time will be needed to instill confidence in the importance of the vaccination with patients, particularly the high number with vaccine hesitancy.
 - Patients may need to be triaged for risk and eligibility and need to be notified to return for subsequent doses.
 - Pharmacists will also have a key role in identification and reporting of vaccine-related adverse effects, particularly with no long-term safety data available.

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#COVID19Vaccine