

# Governments Must Act to Stop Cross-Border Internet Pharmacy – Access for Canadian Patients at Risk

Access to drugs and to health care providers in Canada by Canadians are the core issues this group of stakeholders has with cross-border internet pharmacy.

The following positions are strongly endorsed by: Best Medicines Coalition (BMC), CARP, Canada's Association for the Fifty-Plus, Canadian Pharmacists Association (CPhA), Canadian Treatment Action Council (CTAC).



## Cross-border internet pharmacy and prescription drug exports threaten Canadians' access to drugs.

### Our concerns are:

- Drugs that are meant for Canadian use are increasingly being exported to the US. This could result in a worsening of existing drug shortages for Canadians.
- The potential risk of further delays by pharmaceutical companies in bringing breakthrough drugs to market in Canada because of the diversion into more profitable U.S. markets. There have already been reported cases in Canada.
- Drug prices in Canada will likely rise to combat cross-border internet pharmacies. While the prices of patented drugs are currently regulated in Canada, drug importation legislation in the US Congress and surging demand from Americans are putting pressure on Canadian prices to rise.
- The increased price of Canadian medicines will place further burdens on the already strained public and private drug plans and individuals who rely on these plans. As well this will make it nearly impossible for many individuals who purchase their own drugs to afford them. The result will be fewer affordable drugs in Canada for Canadians.

## Cross-border internet pharmacy threatens Canadians' access to pharmacists and physicians in Canada.

### Our concerns are:

- Today in Manitoba, a significant number of pharmacists have left the public domain to work for cross-border internet pharmacies. The result is that pharmacies serving the community, nursing homes, hospitals, and particularly in rural areas are reducing services, shortening their hours, or are facing closure.
- The nature of cross-border internet pharmacy does not allow for fundamental ethical requirements to be met. According to the Canadian Medical Association: "It is not acceptable for a physician to sign a prescription without properly assessing the patient." Cross-border internet pharmacy opens the door to unethical behaviour.
- Cross-border internet pharmacies could restrict Canadians' access to much needed health care professionals. Canadian doctors should be treating Canadians, not taking cash payments to co-sign prescriptions for Americans, on behalf of internet pharmacy companies.
- Cross-border internet pharmacies fragment care and threaten the Patient-Physician-Pharmacist relationship and team approach that helps ensure appropriate and safe medicine use.

## Our Recommendations

The Federal Government must immediately bring together the groups listed below to develop a pan-Canadian strategy to stop cross-border internet pharmacy and exportation of drugs to the U.S. This strategy must include the following recommendations:

### 1) Federal Government

- Act immediately to stop the export of prescription medications to ensure their continued availability at affordable prices for Canadians.
- Continue to support drug pricing regulation in Canada through the Patented Medicines Prices Review Board (PMPRB), and to protect Canada's drug pricing regime in international trade negotiations and agreements.

### 2) Provincial Governments

- Support the role of the self-regulatory bodies for physicians and pharmacists through legislation that ensures they have the necessary powers to control the cross-border internet pharmacy industry in their jurisdictions.

### 3) Provincial Regulatory Bodies for Pharmacists and Physicians

- Continue to monitor, and where necessary, discipline those members who are engaged in cross-border internet pharmacy.
- Create a pan-Canadian information-sharing program so that those physicians and pharmacists who are engaged in the cross-border internet pharmacy industry can be identified and disciplined effectively in all jurisdictions.

### 4) Pharmaceutical Industry

- Support the existing supply chain to ensure medicines are available to all Canadians when they need it.
- Work with governments, patients and other stakeholders to address the issue in the best interest of Canadians and continue to work within the present drug pricing regulatory system in Canada.

### 5) Consumers

- Provide consumers/patients with information and tools to raise awareness of the impact of the cross-border drug exportation, including the potential for price increases, shortages and lack of access to pharmacists and physicians.
- Empower and educate consumer group members and the public regarding impact, and be provided with the resources and channels of communication to provide feedback to governments, health care professionals, and policy makers regarding the impact of drug exportation on access and quality of care.

### This document is endorsed by the following organizations:

Arthritis Consumer Experts

Best Medicines Coalition

Canadian Arthritis Patient Alliance

CARP - Canada's Association for the Fifty-Plus

Canadian Breast Cancer Network

Canadian Hepatitis C Network

Canadian Pharmacists Association

Canadian Treatment Action Council

Coalition of Manitoba Pharmacy

Consumer Advocare Network

HepCURE

Manitoba Society of Seniors

The Arthritis Society

Yellowhead Tribal Council