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**DIABETES  
CANADA**



Practical Diabetes

## Pharmacists' Scope of Practice: Supports for Canadians with Diabetes

Kerry Mansell BSP, PharmD, MBA <sup>a,\*</sup>, Kirsten Edmunds BSP <sup>a</sup>, Lisa Guirguis BSc Pharm, PhD <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> College of Pharmacy and Nutrition, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada

<sup>b</sup> Faculty of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

### Key Messages

- Pharmacists in each Canadian province have seen an expanded scope of practice in recent years that is advantageous for people living with diabetes
- Depending on the province, pharmacists are able to provide publicly-funded medication reviews, vaccinations, renewal of prescriptions, and some pharmacists are able to order and interpret laboratory results (such as A1C)
- This article describes services which may be beneficial to diabetes patients that pharmacists can provide in each province

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### ABSTRACT

**Objectives:** The pharmacists' role in Canada has significantly advanced over the past decade, resulting in increasing access to primary care services. This study aimed to characterize pharmacists' expanded scope of practice as it relates to providing services to Canadians with diabetes.

**Methods:** This environmental scan characterized services that could be useful to Canadians with diabetes in each of the provinces (excluding the territories): immunizations, medication prescribing, ordering and interpreting laboratory tests, and medication reviews. Researchers also collected information on pharmacists' access to health information. Data were collected from regulatory authorities in each province, from pharmacy stakeholders and through a web search.

**Results:** Pharmacists' scope of practice varies widely across the Canadian provinces. Three provinces have medication-review programs focused specifically on diabetes, and many people with diabetes can access publicly funded medication reviews. Other than in Quebec, pharmacists can provide influenza (publicly funded) and pneumococcal vaccinations (publicly funded in British Columbia, Alberta and Manitoba). All pharmacists in Canadian provinces can renew prescriptions to ensure continuity of therapy. Pharmacists have varying levels of other prescriptive authority. Pharmacists in all provinces (except Ontario) can access provincial prescription information; in 4 provinces, they can access laboratory results, and in 3 provinces, they can order and interpret laboratory results, such as glycated hemoglobin levels.

**Conclusions:** Canadians with diabetes can expect to receive influenza vaccines and have medications renewed at their pharmacies. Many patients with diabetes qualify for a publicly funded medication review, and some provinces allow pharmacists to order and interpret laboratory results. This expanded scope provides greater opportunities for pharmacists to help support patients with diabetes in conjunction with other health-care team members.

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\* Address for correspondence: Kerry Mansell, BSP, PharmD, MBA, College of Pharmacy and Nutrition, University of Saskatchewan, 104 Clinic Place, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 5E5, Canada.

E-mail address: [kerry.mansell@usask.ca](mailto:kerry.mansell@usask.ca)

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## R É S U M É

Mots clés :  
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**Objectifs :** Au Canada, le rôle des pharmaciens a considérablement évolué au cours de la dernière décennie, ce qui a entraîné un accès accru aux services de soins primaires. La présente étude a pour but de décrire le champ de pratique élargi des pharmaciens en ce qui touche la prestation des services aux Canadiens diabétiques.

**Méthodes :** Cette enquête sur le milieu a décrit les services susceptibles d'être utiles aux Canadiens diabétiques dans chacune des provinces (sauf les territoires) : immunisation, prescription de médicaments, prescription et interprétation des examens de laboratoire et revue de la médication. Les chercheurs ont également collecté des informations sur l'accès des pharmaciens aux renseignements sur la santé. La collecte de données provenait des organismes de réglementation de chacune des provinces, des intervenants de la pharmacie et d'une recherche sur le Web.

**Résultats :** Le champ de pratique des pharmaciens varie grandement entre les provinces canadiennes. Trois provinces ont des programmes de revue de la médication qui portent particulièrement sur le diabète. Par conséquent, de nombreuses personnes diabétiques ont accès à la revue de la médication financée par les fonds publics. À l'exception du Québec, les pharmaciens peuvent offrir la vaccination antigrippale (programme financé par les fonds publics) et la vaccination antipneumococcique (programme financé par les fonds publics en Colombie-Britannique, en Alberta et au Manitoba). Tous les pharmaciens des provinces canadiennes peuvent renouveler les ordonnances pour assurer la continuité du traitement. Les pharmaciens détiennent un pouvoir variable de prescription. Les pharmaciens de toutes les provinces, excepté l'Ontario, ont accès à un système provincial d'information sur les médicaments prescrits ; dans 4 provinces, ils ont accès aux résultats d'examens de laboratoire, et dans 3 provinces, ils peuvent prescrire et interpréter les résultats d'examens de laboratoire tels que les concentrations de l'hémoglobine glyquée.

**Conclusions :** Les Canadiens diabétiques peuvent s'attendre à recevoir le vaccin antigrippal et à obtenir le renouvellement de leurs médicaments à leur pharmacie. De nombreux patients diabétiques répondent aux critères du programme de la revue de la médication financé par les fonds publics. De plus, dans certaines provinces, les pharmaciens peuvent prescrire et interpréter les résultats d'examens de laboratoire. L'élargissement de leur champ de pratique offre davantage de possibilités aux pharmaciens pour contribuer de manière conjointe avec d'autres membres de l'équipe soignante au soutien des patients diabétiques.

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## Introduction

The prevalence of diabetes in Canada continues to grow exponentially, leading Diabetes Canada to believe that an estimated 5 million Canadians will have diabetes by 2025 (1). People with diabetes require access to a wide range of resources and an interprofessional health-care team, including physicians, nurses, dietitians, pharmacists, podiatrists and others, to help manage this chronic, multifaceted condition. As the prevalence of patients with diabetes increases and places additional strain on the health-care system, community-based health-care professionals will need to play greater roles in the management of Canadians with diabetes.

Pharmacists play an essential role in the care of patients with diabetes because medications are an integral part of diabetes management. Systematic reviews have shown that pharmacists' interventions lead to improved health outcomes (for example, in levels of glycated hemoglobin [A1C] and blood pressure) in patients with diabetes (2,3). There are close to 39,000 licensed pharmacists in Canada, of whom about 70% work in community pharmacies (4). Most community pharmacies have evening and weekend hours and do not require appointments to see the pharmacists, so these pharmacists are the most easily accessible health-care professionals in Canada (4). Canadian pharmacists are taking an increasingly active interest in diabetes management as well; there are approximately 2200 certified diabetes educator (CDE) pharmacists in Canada. Pharmacists account for almost half of all CDEs in Canada and represent the fastest growing segment of CDEs of all health-care professionals in Canada (personal communication, Canadian Diabetes Educator Certificate Board).

In the past decade, provinces have responded to a growing need for accessible community-based care by expanding pharmacists' scope of practice. Pharmacists' roles vary by province and include activities, such as prescribing medications and injecting vaccinations. Several provincial governments have enacted programs that focus care on patients with diabetes.

Despite these new opportunities, Canadians are often not aware of pharmacists' expanded roles and, subsequently, may not take advantage of these opportunities (5–7). The biggest challenges pharmacists encounter when implementing these practice changes are overcoming patients' perceptions of pharmacists as dispensers and pharmacists' hesitancy to promote these services (8). Similarly, health-care professionals may not be aware of pharmacists' growing scope of practice and the potential benefits for their patients. This article provides an overview of pharmacists' scope of practice in Canada as well as the implications for patient care.

## Methods

An environmental scan was conducted to assess pharmacists' services available to patients with diabetes in Canada. Data were collected about government-funded diabetes-specific services, such as diabetes medication reviews as well as general services that would be useful to Canadians with diabetes: immunizations for influenza and pneumococcal disease, medication prescribing, ordering laboratory tests and medication reviews in general. Researchers also collected information about pharmacists' access to health information (laboratory values, pharmaceutical records and electronic health records) because these may influence pharmacists' abilities to provide the services above.

In order to determine which activities pharmacists can perform in each of the Canadian provinces, representatives from the regulatory authorities in each province were contacted. Correspondence with these representatives was conducted via e-mail and telephone. Data were also collected from the websites of the provincial regulatory authorities, provincial and national pharmacy advocacy groups, practising pharmacists and provincial eHealth services. Information about financial reimbursement for pharmacist services was obtained from the Canadian Foundation for Pharmacy (9). Expanded-scope activities are not legislated in the

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