

Ministry of Health
and Long-Term Care

Ontario Public Drug Programs

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Assistant Deputy Minister

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Ministère de la Santé
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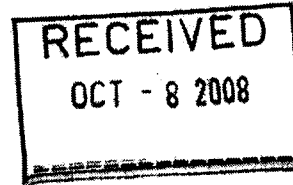
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OCT 07 2008



Dennis Darby
Chief Executive Officer
Ontario Pharmacists' Association
375 University Avenue, Suite 800
Toronto ON M5G 2J5

Dear Mr. ~~Darby~~ ^{Dennis}:

This is in follow up to our discussion on the changes made to the dispensing fee reimbursement regulations and the concerns raised by the Ontario Pharmacists' Association (OPA).

At this time, only residents of Long-Term Care homes are exempt from the regulations for the twice monthly restrictions on dispensing fee payments. We will also include Homes for Special Care as part of this exemption. There are currently 158 homes under the *Homes for Special Care Act* that will be eligible for this exemption. We plan to update the website information in the next two weeks to include this exemption and provide a list for pharmacies so that pharmacists are aware of which homes are eligible for this change.

We are continuing to look at other opportunities where we can consider further exemptions. We spoke briefly about retirement homes. It is our understanding that membership for the Ontario Retirement Communities Association (ORCA) and compliance with its accreditation standards is voluntary and as such we do not have a complete list of retirement homes and we do not have a reliable measure that persons within these homes require a level of care which supports more frequent dispensing. We will continue to review this request. If the OPA has further information they would like us to consider, please forward this to my attention as appropriate.

We will be expanding the list of exempted medications to include some of the products noted in your request. Anticonvulsants as categorized in the formulary and lithium will be added to the list of exempted products. In addition, we will add some of the products used to treat Parkinson's Disease and Alzheimer's Disease. We will monitor the claims in the antiarrhythmic class over the next two months to determine if these products should be added to the list. For the remaining classes of products, it would be helpful if you provided more rationale beyond the clinical indication as to why the products should be exempt.

We recognize that the OPA would like pharmacists to use their professional discretion when submitting claims for all products listed on the Formulary, but at this time we can only support

more frequent dispensing for products noted on the exemption list. We will continue to review this list based on OPA's comments and review our claim submissions to determine if further changes are required.

We will be implementing changes to the Health Network System (HNS) to support the twice monthly reimbursement process. We anticipate these changes will be put in place in late November 2008. Significant changes are required to support a reimbursement process based on a 14 day cycle which would significantly delay any changes made to the HNS. We will continue to review the HNS to determine if changes can be made to support a 14 day payment cycle in the future.

With regards to your question about the application of professional allowances, we do recognize that packaging used to dispense medications in compliance with these regulations are considered an appropriate use of professional allowances and pharmacies are not required to have physicians validate the use of compliance packaging as part of the documentation for the professional allowance reporting framework. This would be effective as of August 1st.

Thank you for your comments on the dispensing fee regulations. We will consider further information you would like the ministry to review in relation to these changes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Helen Stevenson".

Helen Stevenson
Assistant Deputy Minister and Executive Officer