

## **PHARMACIST AWARENESS MONTH HIGHLIGHTS HOW PHARMACISTS OFFER MORE**

*Ontarians Now Have Access to Travel Vaccines at their Local Pharmacy*

TORONTO, March 9, 2017— March is Pharmacist Awareness Month, a month to recognize the critical role Ontario’s pharmacists play and to raise awareness around the full range of services they can provide that are vital to the healthcare system—and the many other services they could be providing.

As of December 2016, Ontario’s pharmacists were given the authority to administer travel and other vaccines to Ontarians over the age of five in order to help protect against 13 preventable diseases. These include vaccines for Hepatitis A and B, shingles, meningococcal and pneumococcal disease, Japanese encephalitis, typhoid, and yellow fever. Ontarians are encouraged to speak to their pharmacist about which of these vaccines are available at their pharmacy.

“This addition to pharmacists’ scope of services has offered Ontarians the convenience of quality health care outside of regular physician office and clinic hours,” said Sean Simpson, Chair of the Board for the Ontario Pharmacists Association (OPA). “Having pharmacists provide services like these contributes to a sustainable healthcare system by helping people manage their health. We hope to see additional expansions of services to include the treatment of common ailments, further increasing timely access to care for all patients, and alleviating the financial pressure on Ontario’s healthcare costs.”

In addition to administering travel vaccines, pharmacists can also provide a MedsCheck medication review at no charge for eligible patients, administer the flu shot, offer smoking cessation counselling, and provide support, information and education about chronic conditions. All of this on top of dispensing medications.

However, there is still a lot more that pharmacists could offer. The Ontario Pharmacists Association has called upon the Ontario government to further expand pharmacists’ scope of practice to include the treatment of common ailments (like diaper rash, athlete’s foot and pink eye) which could greatly improve patients’ access to healthcare services, while reducing or reallocating healthcare costs and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of our healthcare system.

### **MORE THAN 4 IN 5 ONTARIANS ARE COMFORTABLE TALKING TO PHARMACISTS ABOUT COMMON AILMENTS<sup>1</sup>**

A 2017 survey by Abacus Data found that Ontarians already have a strong positive impression of pharmacists, and that they are ready to trust pharmacists with their common ailment concerns. Results indicate that 94 per cent of Ontarians have a positive impression of pharmacists and the majority (58 per cent) feel that pharmacists could play a greater role in the management of their health.<sup>1</sup> The survey also showed that 85 per cent of Ontarians feel comfortable speaking with pharmacists about common ailments.<sup>1</sup>

The Abacus Data survey was designed to measure perceptions and attitudes towards pharmacists across Canada and was conducted online with a representative sample of 4,173 adult Canadians – among them 500 Ontarians. The survey was completed from February 10 to 16, 2017.

#### **ABOUT THE ONTARIO PHARMACISTS ASSOCIATION**

The Ontario Pharmacists Association is committed to evolving the pharmacy profession, and advocating for excellence in practice and patient care. As Canada's largest advocacy organization, and continuing education and drug information provider for pharmacists, the Association represents pharmacy professionals across Ontario. By leveraging the unique expertise of pharmacy professionals, enabling them to practice to their fullest potential, and making them more accessible to patients, OPA is working to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the healthcare system.

#### **For more information, or to arrange an interview, please contact:**

Lindsay George  
Manager, Communications and Marketing  
Ontario Pharmacists Association  
416-441-0788 x 4236  
lgeorge@opatoday.com

Françoise Makanda  
GCI Group  
[francoise.makanda@gcicanada.com](mailto:francoise.makanda@gcicanada.com)  
416-486-5920

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<sup>1</sup> Pharmacists in Ontario: Perceptions and attitudes towards pharmacists in Ontario with national comparisons. Abacus Data. February 2017