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JAN 19 2008

Dr. Shamim Jetha
President
BC College of Family Physicians
350 - 1665 West Broadway
Vancouver BC V6J 1X1

Dear Dr. Jetha:

Thank you for your letter of November 19, 2008, regarding your concerns with respect to the expanded role of pharmacists in British Columbia (BC). I apologize for the delayed response.

In preparation for the January 1, 2009, implementation of pharmacist's authority to renew and adapt prescriptions, the College of Pharmacists of BC (the College) has, in collaboration with other health care professionals, including members of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC and the BC Medical Association (BCMA), developed a professional practice policy to guide pharmacists as they take on an expanded role in the health care system.

The College's Professional Practice Policy #58 titled "Protocol for Medication Management – Adapting a Prescription" (PPP-58) provides the framework to guide pharmacists in the safe and effective adaptation, including renewals, of existing prescriptions. PPP-58 is applicable to pharmacists in all practice settings including: community, hospital and other institutional pharmacy settings.

Under PPP-58, it is mandatory that a pharmacist choosing to adapt a prescription do so with the intent to optimize therapeutic outcome of treatment and the adaptation must be done in accordance with PPP-58 and within the limits of the pharmacist's own competencies.

With respect to your concern regarding pharmacists both prescribing and dispensing medications, it is important to stress that this initiative does not include pharmacists initiating new prescriptions, but instead using the specialized knowledge of the pharmacist to assist the prescriber in providing better care for the patient. Under the initiative, prescription adaptation is defined as one of three professional activities: renewing a prescription, changing the dose, formulation or regimen of a prescription to enhance patient outcomes or making a therapeutic drug substitution within the same therapeutic class for a prescription. Adaptation authority applies to existing prescriptions only and a pharmacist must have the original prescription.

In order to adapt a prescription, a pharmacist must possess professional liability insurance (minimum \$2 million) and must adhere to all of the seven fundamentals for adapting a prescription as outlined in PPP-58. Once a pharmacist adapts a prescription, they take full responsibility for and assume liability for that adapted prescription.

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Specifically regarding your concerns with respect to maintaining the patient's longitudinal health record, at all times, when adapting a prescription pharmacists must notify the original prescriber. Notification must take place as soon as reasonably possible, preferably within 24 hours. Pharmacists must also notify the patient's most responsible clinician if they are aware that the original prescriber is not their patient's usual practitioner. Although a requirement of PPP-58, one of the benefits of notification is that it provides enhanced opportunity for collaboration between pharmacists, the prescriber and the patient.

To familiarize pharmacists with PPP-58, the College developed an Orientation Guide. A number of further clarifications and updates have been made to the original Orientation Guide which pharmacists need to be aware of. These updates are the result of incorporating feedback expressed by pharmacists at the more than 30 orientation sessions held throughout the province as well as addressing concerns by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC and the BCMA.

All pharmacists who are licensed in BC are required to have read the Orientation Guide and Amendment to the Orientation Guide by December 31, 2008.

As well, the College will use existing Quality Assurance tools (e.g., regular inspections of pharmacies, retrospective reviews, peer reviews), the existing Professional Development and Assessment Program, and compliance with the ethical practice obligations encompassed by the pharmacists' professional standards of practice, to assure continued pharmacist competency.

With regard to your concern that pharmacists may be placed in a position of real or perceived conflict of interest and that the adaptation of a prescription may lead to increased revenue thereby enhancing a pharmacist's financial interest, pharmacists must consider the interest and well-being of their patients first and foremost. Prescriptions must not be adapted unless it is in the best interest of a patient to do so. Any indication that the decision was based on benefit to the pharmacist or pharmacy rather than the patient, will be considered professional misconduct and reviewed through the College's Inquiry Committee process.

I am also pleased to tell you that a Monitoring Adapting Prescriptions Task Force, with representatives from the College, the BC Pharmacy Association, the BCMA, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC and the Ministry of Health Services has been established to evaluate this new authority, review the limits and conditions and make recommendations to the College who will evolve the authority, as appropriate, in the coming year.

I appreciate the opportunity to respond.

Yours truly,



George Abbott
Minister