

NEWS RELEASE: National pharmacare will reduce access to new medicines for 27 million privately insured Canadians

Description

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TORONTO, April 18, 2024 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) — The federal Liberal-NDP coalition government recently announced it would work with the provinces to fund universal prescription drug benefits for contraceptives and diabetes medications. It is the first step toward a national pharmacare program that will replace existing public and private drug plans.

As a single payer system, pharmacare will move all Canadians into one system modelled on existing public drug plans. To examine how this might affect access to medicines, a recent study from the Canadian Health Policy Institute compared the number of new drugs covered under public versus private drug plans and how long Canadians waited for insured access to those drugs.

The analysis confirms that public plans cover far fewer new drugs compared to private plans in Canada. Public plans also take much longer to cover new drugs compared to private plans.

Of the 166 new medicines authorized for marketing by Health Canada from 2018-2022, on average, public drug plans covered only 30 (18%), compared to 106 (64%) in private drug plans. In other words, publicly insured Canadians were covered for less than 1 out of every 5 new drugs that Health Canada deemed safe and effective during the study period. By contrast, privately insured Canadians were covered for 3.5 times the number of new drugs available to publicly insured Canadians.

For the few new drugs that were listed, publicly insured Canadians waited over two years on average, from Health Canada approval, for those medicines to be available in their provincial or federal plans. This was twice as long as the average wait times experienced by privately insured Canadians. The data indicate that the insurance coverage delay averaged 770 days across all listings in the 11 provincial and federal public drug formularies. The comparable average wait time for insurance coverage for new medicines in the private sector drug plans was 369 days.

The limited scope of coverage in existing public drug plans is indicative of what Canadians can expect from national pharmacare. The results of this study forewarn that national pharmacare will reduce access to new medicines for 27 million Canadians currently covered under private plans.

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Read the study: <https://www.canadianhealthpolicy.com/>