

Pharmacy scope of practice and access to Opioid Agonist Therapies (OAT) in Canada after COVID-19

Description

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ABSTRACT: Under the regulations contained in the federal Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (CDSA), prescribing, selling, distributing and other related activities involving drugs like opioids are only allowed for designated health professions. On March 19, 2020, Health Canada issued an exemption, temporarily expanding pharmacists' scope of practice to include activities usually prohibited by the CDSA. The exemption was implemented partly to facilitate continuity of access to opioid agonist therapies (OAT) for people suffering from opioid use disorder (OUD) during the COVID-19 pandemic. This article discusses the implications of making the exemption permanent. We review the latest research and data on the health and economic costs associated with OUD, to clarify the magnitude of the problem and significance of expanding the scope of practice for pharmacists. We discuss the scope of practice issues for pharmacists related to improving patient access to OAT and offer policy recommendations.

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