



MS. JULIE GREEN
MLA, YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

MAR 02 2017

OQ 577-18(2): Prescription Drug Monitoring Program

Thank you for raising the questions regarding prescription drug monitoring on February 15, 2017. This is a very important issue and we are committed to working to implement a prescription drug monitoring program for safer prescribing practices in the NWT.

In 2014, the *Pharmacy Act* was amended to allow for the sharing of personal health information that is necessary for a prescription monitoring program (PMP) to be effective. For example, a pharmacist must share the name of the patient, their health care number, the name of the monitored drug and dosage prescribed, along with the prescriber's name. Once the amendment passed, work began on regulations to give the legal authority for a prescription monitoring program to be put in place. This project was put on hold to advance the roll out of the Electronic Medical Record (EMR) and to monitor work being done at a national level on prescription drug monitoring to see what best practices would emerge from this initiative. For example, DHSS participates in a F/P/T prescription monitoring program working group which is currently:

- Developing a set of common data standards for prescription monitoring programs best practice
- Identifying and assessing potential privacy challenges around prescription monitoring programs
- Identifying barriers to mandatory consultation of the prescription monitoring program by prescribers or dispensers
- Engaging with key stakeholders to help promote interoperability of prescription monitoring programs across jurisdictions

.../2



Prescription Drug Monitoring Program

What is a prescription drug monitoring program?

- A prescription drug monitoring program is designed to monitor the prescribing and dispensing of controlled substances to help identify patients who may be at risk of becoming addicted, enabling early intervention to reduce the overall misuse and abuse of these drugs.
- Prescription monitoring programs (PMPs) serve the following three purposes:
 - To enhance patient care and assist in the safe use of controlled prescription drugs;
 - To reduce the harms resulting from the use of controlled prescription drugs;
 - To assist in reducing the diversion of controlled prescription drugs.
- In their purpose of enhancing patient care and safety, PMPs play a role in the following key functions:
 - Increasing the ability to detect patterns of inappropriate prescribing and dispensing;
 - Improved ability to share information with regulatory bodies if necessary to monitor individual practice, or groups of practitioners.

What is the Department doing?

- It is the Department's intention to continue moving forward with its work on prescription drug abuse and to further advance the design of a monitoring program.
- Financial investments for a drug monitoring program will significantly impact how we move forward.
- An Opioid Task Group has been established to develop a comprehensive plan to deal with opioid and prescription drug abuse in the NWT. Understanding that legislative amendments and technology to support effective implementation will be required, the task group is in the process of finalizing its work plan; prescription drug monitoring is part of the Task Group's mandate.

.../3



- It is important to note that the work being done under this Task Group includes reducing harm related to illicit, street drugs as well as prescription drugs.
- Ongoing education of health care practitioners on effective pain management for their patients and improved prescribing practices is necessary to prevent individuals from becoming addicted to prescription drugs in the first place but also to be able to identify patients who are addicted or at risk of being addicted to prescription drugs.
- Some NWT residents are covered by the federal Non-Insured Health Benefit (NIHB) program prescription monitoring program (NIHB-PMP). When a client is identified as being potentially at risk of addiction to controlled substances, the NIHB-PMP works with the client to identify a single prescriber for these medications.

Government Role in Pharmacy Errors

- The Department does not have a direct oversight role when a private pharmacy makes a dispensing error but the pharmacist's professional ethics and standards of practice will guide how the incident is handled.
- However, the Department does have a role in ensuring that a Complaints Officer is in place so that any person, including a member of the public or another health care provider, can file a complaint under the NWT *Pharmacy Act* if they feel a pharmacist's conduct is unprofessional.
- If a prescription dispensing error occurs within the health and social services system and caused serious harm to a patient, the Authorities would be required to do a critical incident investigation to determine how to prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future.

E-Prescribing

What is e-prescribing?

- E-Prescribing is the secure, electronic creation and transmission of a prescription between an authorized prescriber and a patient's pharmacy of choice using EMR or a standalone application, and pharmacy management software.

.../4



- E-Prescribing is not the same as prescription drug monitoring. Prescription drug monitoring tracks prescription of controlled substances, whereas e-prescribing entails only the electronic-transmittal of prescriptions. However, e-prescribing can facilitate the implementation of a prescription drug monitoring program.

What is the Department doing?

- The most recent Legislative Proposal to amend the *Pharmacy Act* includes e-prescribing, so that once e-prescribing technology is ready, the legislation will be in place to use it.
- In addition, Canada Health Infoway is moving forward on the creation of a multi-jurisdictional E-Prescribing interchange system that would transmit an electronic prescription between an authorized prescriber and a patient's pharmacy of choice.

Thank you.

Glen Abernethy
Minister of Health and Social Services

c Mr. Tim Mercer
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

Mr. David Hastings
Legislative Coordinator, Executive