



Best Medicines Coalition Position Points: National Pharmacare

September 2019

As National Pharmacare is discussed and debated, the **Best Medicines Coalition** offers perspectives from our community of patient organizations, each informed by the needs of Canadian patients and motivated by an urgency to improve care for all.

Core Positions:

Pharmaceutical reform, including National Pharmacare, must focus on building an efficient and streamlined infrastructure aimed at improving patient care by delivering equity but at a high level – not the lowest common denominator approach -- with a comprehensive range of medicines available to all based on medical need.

- The current patchwork of prescription drug coverage in Canada, with widespread inequities and shortfalls, is insufficient to meet the needs of all patients. Too often the result is compromised care and limited outcomes at great cost to taxpayers and suffering to individuals and families.
- Reform proposals, including the implementation of National Pharmacare, must address needs and inequities, levelling up programs to a high standard of comprehensive care, ensuring the most critical disparities are prioritized and resolved. Importantly, reforms must not leave any patient worse off.
- All patients, without exception, must be able to obtain medically necessary medications in a timely manner. Medicines continue to grow in importance in saving lives, reducing suffering, extending years of good health and improving quality of life.

What is comprehensive care?

- Comprehensive means that all patients, without exception, must be able to get the medications each requires. This includes those with chronic, complex, difficult to treat, and/or rare conditions. Comprehensive must include specialized drugs, and medications considered curative or breakthrough.
- Drug formularies must be robust in scope and depth, with flexibility to meet needs. So-called essential medicines lists may have merit as a stop gap measure, but would leave too many Canadians without adequate coverage, especially if adopted in isolation.
- Rare diseases warrant a specialized approach such as the creation of a national strategy for evaluation and funding.

How should National Pharmacare be managed?

- Reform proposals have great potential to establish systems which are integrated and efficient, facilitating timely access to needed medications, including breakthrough therapies to address unmet needs.
- The current labyrinth must be reformed to eliminate duplication and waste. New agencies or structures must not be add-ons or additional layers, but rather lean instruments for modernization and effectiveness.
- Governance must be reformed to be accountable and transparent, with a strong role for patients entrenched throughout policy development and decision-making.

How should funding and affordability issues be addressed?

- Whether within a single payer public system or mixed public and private, comprehensive care is not achievable if underfunded. Pragmatic and workable solutions must be explored.
- The current culture of acceptance of cost-sharing of drugs must be addressed, recognizing that pharmaceuticals are a legitimate part of medical care. Strategies must overwhelmingly reduce the 22 percent of drug spending which is paid out-of-pocket by individual Canadians.
- System affordability is critical, including regarding drug prices, but the ability of Canadian patients to access new drugs in a timely manner must not be compromised.

Important questions to ask:

Canadians should consider change proposals as they are presented and evaluate by asking the following questions:

Who will be covered?

To what extent does it cover everyone and will the needs of those who are currently falling through the cracks be addressed?

What will be covered?

To what extent is it truly comprehensive in terms of numbers and types of drugs covered?

Further documents regarding **Best Medicines Coalition** positions on National Pharmacare are posted on its [website](#).

About Best Medicines Coalition

The **Best Medicines Coalition** (BMC) is a national alliance of 28 patient organizations with a shared goal of equitable and consistent access for all Canadians to safe and effective medicines that improve patient outcomes. The BMC's areas of interest include drug approval, assessment and reimbursement, as well as patient safety and supply issues. As an important aspect of its work, the BMC strives to ensure that Canadian patients have a voice and are meaningful participants in health policy development, specifically regarding pharmaceutical care. The BMC's core activities involve issue education and advocacy, including communicating patient-driven consensus positions to decision makers and other stakeholders.

