

March is Pharmacist Awareness Month. *The pharmacist is in! Our role is changing to help you better manage your health.* Talk to us about how we can help you!

The theme for this year's Pharmacist Awareness Month is "The pharmacist is in". This highlights that pharmacists are the most accessible and convenient health care provider, and they are taking on new expanded roles all over Canada, making them an even more valuable member of your health care team!!

The role of the pharmacist has been expanding over the past few years and is continuing to expand. This is extremely exciting for pharmacists and for patients!

Pharmacists are the drug experts when it comes to health care. Physicians specialize in diagnosing and treating medical conditions, and pharmacists specialize in any treatment of a medical condition that involves use of medications. You can rely on your pharmacist to answer any drug-related questions and to optimize your medication therapy regimen. Pharmacists are working closely with doctors to provide the best health care for patients. A pharmacist is often the most accessible health care provider, and we are trained extensively in management of conditions, medications, and also differentiating between a condition that can be treated without aid of a doctor, and when a patient presents with a problem that is an instance where referral to the doctor is necessary. The expansion of pharmacy practice is allowing pharmacists to share their vast knowledge with patients to achieve the best overall health.

Patients can also benefit greatly from the services that pharmacists can do. These services are entirely patient-focused. We are driven to do anything that is best for you, the patient.

One of the first and most important areas that the role of the pharmacist has expanded is with regard to prescribing rights. Pharmacists can now prescribe for one month of most chronic medications. For example, when you realize late Thursday night that you don't have any of your high blood pressure medication left and you also have no refills - your pharmacist can prescribe this for you so that you do not have to go without and you have some time to get in to see your doctor for a refill. This is going to keep you the healthiest you can be by providing you with your medications so that you can continue to take them as directed without missing. This also takes a bit of the burden off of doctors and waiting rooms. It is important to note that pharmacists can prescribe MOST medications that you are taking on a fairly regular basis. Just like doctors may not feel comfortable prescribing some medications, this goes for pharmacists as well. Controlled drugs, such as narcotics, are an example of a medication that pharmacist cannot and

will not prescribe. One other important point to understand is that this is not intended to be a substitution for seeing your doctor - it is intended to supplement this and allow you to take your medication as directed all the time to keep you healthy.

A second expansion of the practice of pharmacists is Minor Ailments Prescribing. Minor Ailments are conditions that can reliably self-diagnosed by patients, do not require lab work for diagnosis, are self-limiting conditions, are easily differentiated from more serious conditions, and have minimal or short follow up needed. The minor ailments that pharmacists can currently prescribe for include: mild acne, allergic rhinitis, cold sore, diaper rash, insect bites, canker sore and oral thrush. When a patient comes in with any one of these minor ailments, the pharmacist follows a very specific, step-wise process to diagnose and treat it properly. First, we gather information including patient name, date of birth, other medications they are on, and any medical conditions. Then we ask a series of questions that are intended to identify any patients that could have a more serious condition or special circumstances that would require a referral to the doctor. Once the pharmacist has determined that we can safely prescribe a medication to treat this minor ailment, we educate the patient on their new medication and follow up a number of days after the initiation of therapy to ensure it is still safe and effective. For patients who have coverage under the Saskatchewan Drug Plan, this service is covered and of no charge, and the patient will only pay the cost of the drug prescribed. Sometimes it is difficult or time-consuming to see a doctor, and that is why pharmacist prescribing is so exciting. This is offering patients an alternative route to take, rather than waiting in a doctor's office to get a simple prescription for their cold sore, as an example. Pharmacists have competent knowledge of conditions and treatment options to be able to prescribe for these conditions safely, but we are also cautious enough to know when to refer a patient to see a physician. So the next time you feel that tingling of a cold sore coming on, or your baby has a red, irritated bum - come see your pharmacist at Medi-Center Pharmacy for quality, timely care.

Finally, pharmacists are now providing medication assessments. What is a medication assessment, you say? Well - this is a comprehensive analysis of the medications that a patient is on. The pharmacist interviews the patient to gather relevant information about their lifestyle, diet, exercise, medical conditions, and medications. Once this information is gathered, the pharmacist will analyze the information to look for any modifications that can be made to any one of those areas in order to optimize the patient's health. Examples of things a pharmacist might notice while performing a medication assessment include: drug-drug interactions, drug-herb interactions, medical conditions that are not currently being treated, side effects from medications that can be minimized or managed better, or lifestyle modifications that can be made to benefit the patient's medical conditions, health and wellbeing. In Saskatchewan, this service is currently covered by the Saskatchewan Drug Plan for patients who are over 65 years of age and are taking 5 or more chronic medications. This service can also be done yearly, so feel free to schedule it into your year, just like your yearly eye exam. This service is paid by the provincial drug plan for certain patients, but Medi-Center encourages any patient to approach one of the pharmacists to ask about a medication assessment. This is one very important step you can take towards improving your health, medication management and medical conditions.

For more questions on what role your Medi-Center pharmacist can play in your health, come into the store and ask us!

And as always, keep checking back for updates on pharmacy, health tips, news, and much more!