

June 14, 2024

Hon. Ya'ara Saks
Federal Minister of Mental Health
and Addictions
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Hon. Saks:

The current addiction crisis in Canada carries an immense cost to Canadian society through premature death, disease, loss of work, and impact on mental, physical, and family health.

Addiction is a treatable health condition. Pharmacotherapy for alcohol, opioid, and nicotine use disorders (combined with behavioural approaches) improves treatment outcomes for substance use disorders, saves lives, and reduces health, legal and financial costs to Canadian society.

In the treatment of addiction, evidence-based relapse prevention medication options include:

1. **For alcohol:** naltrexone and acamprosate,
2. **For opioids:** buprenorphine-naloxone sublingual, buprenorphine subcutaneous injection, and methadone
3. **For nicotine:** nicotine replacement therapies (nicotine patch, gum, inhaler, lozenge, spray), bupropion, and varenicline.

Unfortunately, these effective pharmacotherapies for the above substance use disorders are underutilized, in part due to their cost, especially for those lacking financial means. In 2022, PEI introduced its Substance Use Harm Reduction Drug Program, which significantly reduced the costs of medications indicated for the treatment of addictions. This pilot project significantly reduced the health impacts of addiction, particularly to equity-deserving groups.

The presence of a toxic drug supply, particularly due to the infiltration of fentanyl and its analogs, underscores the urgent need for accessible pharmacological interventions. Opioid agonist therapies are critical in mitigating the severe risks associated with this hazardous drug supply. The financial investment in providing these medications is minimal compared to the substantial benefits of preventing fentanyl-related overdoses and saving lives.

We believe that access to these medications should be a fundamental right for all Canadians living with addiction. Ensuring that individuals can obtain these life-saving treatments without financial barriers is crucial. By adding these medications to the Canadian National Pharmacare Registry, we can provide equitable access to care and offer hope and recovery to countless individuals and their families.

The Canadian Society of Addiction Medicine requests that the above medications be added to the Canadian National Pharmacare Registry. The ability to allow individuals living with an addictive disorder to access universal, single-payer coverage for the treatment of these disorders is an important step forward in limiting the magnitude and impact of the current addiction health crisis for both individuals and society at large.

Respectfully,



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