

Information Update

Widening the scope of practice of pharmacists in Quebec

As of June 20, 2015, Quebec pharmacists have taken on an expanded role in the management of medications. Quebec pharmacists will now be able to adjust, extend and initiate prescriptions for patients. The NIHB Program will not assume any new responsibility for the payment of patient assessment fees for adjustment, extension, or writing a prescription or any other new fees for professional services now permitted by law. However, NIHB will cover, except in certain circumstances as noted below, the cost of medications and dispensing fees associated with prescriptions that pharmacists are legally allowed to write, if they are on the NIHB Drug Benefit List (DBL).

Key Message:

- In most cases, the NIHB Program will cover the cost of medications and dispensing fees associated with prescriptions written by a pharmacist under the new law.
- The NIHB Program will cover the cost of medications and dispensing fees when pharmacists are allowed to write prescriptions for conditions which do not require a diagnosis, except for cytoprotection, antibiotic prophylaxis for patients with prosthetic heart valves, and medications for travel.
- NIHB continues to review expanded scope of practice legislation nationally and determine which additional conditions or minor ailments may be added to the list of items for which pharmacist initiated prescribing is accepted by the Program. This includes the review of its policies regarding cytoprotection and antibiotic prophylaxis for patients with prosthetic heart valves. As a national program, the NIHB Program will consider the impact across the country before making a decision. NIHB clients can continue to get a prescription from a physician or nurse practitioner for NIHB coverage in these situations.
- NIHB will not reimburse the drug cost and dispensing fee when the medicine is prescribed for travel (traveler's diarrhea, malaria prophylaxis and prophylaxis of acute mountain sickness) as these conditions are considered outside the NIHB mandate.

Questions and Answers:

- Q1 Does NIHB pay pharmacists for adjustment, extension or writing a prescription or other professional services allowed under the new law?**
- A1** No. The NIHB Program will not assume any additional financial liability for the costs associated with patient assessments and other professional services that are generally paid for by the provincial health insurance plan.
- Q2 Can NIHB clients pay the professional fees associated with these new services?**
- A2** Yes. If a pharmacist asks a client to pay a professional fee for adjustment, extension or writing a prescription or other professional services allowed under the new law, the client may pay the professional service fee. However, as before, NIHB clients can obtain comparable services from a health care professional whose fees are covered by the provincial health insurance plan.

Q3 Why does NIHB not cover medications and professional service fee costs in all situations?

A3 In most cases, the NIHB Program will cover the cost of drugs and dispensing fees associated with pharmacist prescribing, provided that the medications are listed on the NIHB DBL.

NIHB continues to review the pharmacist expanded scope of practice legislation in each region and determine which additional conditions or minor ailments may be added to the list of items for which pharmacist initiated prescribing is accepted by the Program. This review will allow the program to ensure that all new spending will promote the long-term sustainability of the program. This systematic approach ensures the judicious use of public funds. Since the NIHB Program is a national program, the potential impact on all regions must be taken into consideration before the implementation of such policies.

Q4 In what circumstances will NIHB not cover drugs and dispensing fees?

A4 Currently, the NIHB Program will not cover the cost of drugs and dispensing fees associated with pharmacist initiated prescribing in the following situations:

- Antibiotic prophylaxis for patients with prosthetic heart valves;
- Cytoprotection; and
- Medications for travel (traveler's diarrhea, malaria prophylaxis and prophylaxis of acute mountain sickness).

Q5 Can NIHB clients pay the cost of drugs and dispensing fees if they are not covered by the NIHB?

A5 Yes. However, as before, eligible NIHB Program clients can obtain comparable services from a health care professional (a physician or a nurse practitioner) and the prescriptions will be covered provided that the medication is listed on the NIHB DBL.

Q6 How are NIHB clients and pharmacists being informed of changes to the NIHB Program policies?

A6 NIHB clients are informed of the changes to the NIHB Program through updates published on the Health Canada website. The internet address for a newsletter focusing-in part on the pharmacist initiated prescribing is below:

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fniah-spnia/nihb-ssna/benefit-prestation/newsletter-bulletin-eng.php#june2014a11>

For more information please contact the Quebec Region call center at: 1-877-483-1575

Pharmacists are informed of changes to the NIHB Program through newsletters posted on the Express Scripts Canada provider website.