

Safeguarding the stability & continuity of the pharmacy supply chain...

The distributor members of the Canadian Association of Pharmacy Distribution Management (CAPDM) are essential to healthcare in Canada, responsible for over 95% of prescription medicines to more than 11,000 pharmacies and hospitals. As such, they have been closely monitoring inventories and customer buying patterns this past month.

With the intensification of events surrounding COVID-19, our distributor members have enhanced vigilance in an effort to further safeguard supply stability and business continuity. Actions include:

- Working with manufacturers on allocation strategies
- Sourcing backup products & supplies
- Securing additional product
- Restricting member facilities to only essential personnel
- Partnering with government partners and agencies in COVID-19 response

That said, some well-intentioned efforts by public health officials is causing some concern for our members. We are concerned by and would ask for the limited use of calls to **“Refill your prescriptions now”** and use of the word **‘stockpile’** in the context of medicines. We believe these phrases without qualification are driving a tremendous increase in volumes for prescription medications as Canadians follow such guidance to the letter.

If such consumer behavior continues unabated in the short term, the higher-than-normal demand will trigger strain on our ability to manage drug shortages, a situation that we are working hard to avoid.

We have already communicated to several governments to better qualify “Refill your prescriptions now” as “Talk to your pharmacist to see if it is appropriate to refill your prescriptions now”, which pharmacist associations are also doing in parallel.

There is an opportunity for public and private payers to promote supply chain stability. We recommend all public and private payors, where appropriate, consider adjusting their policies to temporarily limit prescription refills to 30-day supplies to ensure that prescription medicines will be available to all Canadians during this pandemic, while avoiding drug shortages being triggered by hoarding behavior.