



## Exportation of Pharmaceuticals from Canada to the United States

### **Statement from the Best Medicines Coalition:**

- The Best Medicines Coalition (BMC) acknowledges that pharmaceutical costs and supply issues are a significant barrier to accessibility and optimal patient care and can appreciate the motivation behind measures to address these issues. However, the BMC is gravely concerned about developments which may facilitate the importation of medicines to the United States from other countries, such as Canada.
- Canada's current pharmaceutical supply system, the subject of national price regulation and negotiations, is designed to serve the Canadian population of approximately 36 million. Simply put, Canada is allotted amounts of pharmaceuticals from manufacturers based on estimated Canadian requirements.
- If pharmaceuticals meant for Canadians are exported to the United States, supplies will quickly be depleted. In fact, there are indications that this could happen in as soon as 38 days, given the population of the United States in comparison to Canada's.
- It is not viable for Canadian supplies to meet the needs of those in the United States even in the immediate short term, let alone on an ongoing basis. Increased importation is not sustainable as a method to address domestic prescription drug cost and supply issues in the United States.
- Canada, like many other countries, for the past ten years has been experiencing significant drug shortages, brought about by a number of factors including manufacturing issues and market pressures. In fact, for some conditions, the inability to source certain necessary medicines has reached a critical point with devastating impacts on patient care. Currently, over 750 products are posted on the Canadian drug shortage registry (<http://drugshortages.ca/drugshortagehome.asp>) including epilepsy drugs, chemotherapy drugs, supportive treatments for cancer, painkillers, anesthetics, anti-inflammatory drugs, antibiotics and hormones.
- As an additional reference, [www.canadadrugshortage.com](http://www.canadadrugshortage.com) provides information about the ongoing shortage issue, highlighting patient stories of those who are impacted. Epilepsy is one area in which shortages are critical. For those with epilepsy, interrupting medication or switching to a different compound can result in uncontrolled seizures and potentially serious health consequences. Within this community, patient advocates associated with the Canadian Epilepsy Alliance, a BMC member organization, are working hard to urge Canadian policy makers to address these issues. This has been the focus of media attention in Canada. For example: (<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/epilepsy-drug-shortage-in-canada-worries-patients-families/article28832349>)

../2

- As the BMC expressed to a Parliamentary Committee examining drug shortages: Disruptions in drug supply put patient health at risk and are costly to the health care system. The current drug shortage situation is critical, demanding an urgent approach to fully understand its scope and causes and a strong regulatory framework to protect patient health. It is paramount that the development of effective solutions must involve all stakeholders, especially patients. Full document : ([http://bestmedicines.ca/files/BMC\\_Standing\\_Committee\\_on\\_Health\\_Submission\\_March\\_29\\_2012\\_FINAL\[1\].pdf](http://bestmedicines.ca/files/BMC_Standing_Committee_on_Health_Submission_March_29_2012_FINAL[1].pdf))
- The BMC urges policy makers in the United States to shift their focus to meaningful, long term reforms which will deliver affordable and accessible health care and pharmaceutical products to American patients within the context of the United States' health care system.

**About the Best Medicines Coalition:**

The Best Medicines Coalition (BMC) is a national alliance of 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 issues, as well as patient safety and supply concerns. 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.

**Best Medicines Coalition Members:**

Alliance for Access to Psychiatric Medications	Canadian Treatment Action Council
Arthritis Consumer Experts	Cancer Advocacy Coalition of Canada
Asthma Society of Canada	Foundation Fighting Blindness
Better Pharmacare Coalition	Gastrointestinal Society
Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada	Health Coalition of Alberta
Canadian Arthritis Patient Alliance	Kidney Cancer Canada
Canadian Breast Cancer Network	Lymphoma Foundation Canada
Canadian Epilepsy Alliance	Ovarian Cancer Canada
Canadian Hemophilia Society	Parkinson Society Canada
Canadian PKU & Allied Disorders	Save Your Skin
Canadian Skin Patient Alliance	Tourette Canada
Canadian Society of Intestinal Research	