

Prescribing and Dispensing of Drugs to Treat COVID-19

Increased urgency to affirm appropriateness of use

There has been significant mention in both the media and on the internet on the use of certain anti-malarial, antibiotic and antiviral therapies in the treatment of COVID-19 patients.

Notwithstanding the widespread hope that a cure or treatment for COVID-19 symptoms is found quickly, Manitobans have an expectation that their health team members, including physicians, nurse practitioners and pharmacists, continue to work together to ensure that prescribing and dispensing of medications for the treatment of this deadly virus is evidence-based and in the best interest of patient and public safety.

There has been a significant increase in the number of prescriptions written and dispensed for some drugs associated with media and internet claims (e.g., Kaletra[®], hydroxychloroquine) over the past two weeks in Manitoba. Assessing patients and critically evaluating prescriptions are foundational responsibilities of physicians, nurse practitioners, and pharmacists in supporting appropriate drug therapy.

Due to the recent yet-to-be-proven claims of effectiveness of hydroxychloroquine sulfate against COVID-19 and the growth in prescribing for it, we are now faced with a very serious shortage (and some brands, outages) of the product. This presents very serious challenges for long-term continuity of care for patients suffering from rheumatoid arthritis and lupus.

CPhM would like to remind pharmacists of their responsibilities to their patients and the public, as outlined in Section III and VII of the [Code of Ethics](#). Additionally, pharmacists are encouraged to review Section 83 of the Pharmaceutical Regulations, which outline a pharmacist's responsibility to ensure the appropriateness of treatment and to ensure that a drug has been prescribed in accordance with the standards of care and patient safety.

CRNM would like to remind RN(NP)s of their responsibilities to their patients and the public, to meet the Practice Expectations of RNs and RN(NP)s and the Code of Ethics.

CPSM reminds prescribing members of section 6 in the [Code of Ethics and Professionalism](#) and the provisions defining good medical care in the [CPSM Standard of Practice Regulation](#) section 3.

Collectively, CPSM, CRNM, and CPhM recognize and appreciate your extraordinary efforts during these unprecedented and challenging times. Your diligence will support appropriate use, improved health, and the continued availability of these drugs for those who need them most.