



Announcing a joint collaboration between Rheumatology and Pharmacy in Ontario: Enhancing Patient Care through the Use of MedsCheck

Since February 2014, the Ontario Rheumatology Association Models of Care Committee* and the Ontario Pharmacists Association have partnered together to establish ways to strengthen interprofessional communications and collaboration between rheumatologists and pharmacists in an effort to enhance and optimize the quality of care for their patients.

A recent article published by the Canadian Medical Protective Association emphasizes the importance of physician/pharmacist communication in optimizing drug therapy¹. Since 2007, pharmacists in Ontario have been conducting OHIP-covered patient medication reviews for any individual on three or more chronic prescription medications. This medication review is referred to as a MedsCheck². Subsequent to the MedsCheck consultation between the patient and his/her pharmacist, an updated and personalized list of all current prescription and non-prescription medications is prepared for the patient. Any real or potential therapeutic concerns arising from the MedsCheck are addressed with the appropriate healthcare provider(s). The amount of time spent in the appointment will vary on the complexity of the patient profile and on the concerns raised. Identifying drug interactions, medication duplication, adherence and smoking cessation are examples of the elements that can be covered within the MedsCheck.

Pharmacy

Pharmacists play a significant educational role regarding medication usage. As patients may forget what is said during an office visit, a dialogue between the patient's rheumatologist and pharmacist can reinforce consistency in messaging and will be invaluable to the patient while strengthening the inter-professional relationship. With the growing use of EMRs within rheumatology practices, it may become easier to integrate key clinical messages within a prescription to clarify the prescriber's intent and to facilitate consistency in messaging during the patient-pharmacist interaction. Other tips for enhancing prescription clarity include:

- > **Identification by the prescriber that a dosage is being changed;**
- > **Communication by the prescriber of the awareness and full consideration of a real or potential drug-drug interaction and that the prescription can still proceed to be dispensed for this particular patient.**

Rheumatology

The Ontario Rheumatology Association is working with the Ontario Pharmacists Association to develop "sample statements" that can be easily integrated into the physician's EMR to help inform pharmacists of common drug interactions which do not have clinical significance for the patient in question. Including these statements within the "sig" of the prescription can avoid unnecessary calls and faxes, thereby respecting the valuable time of both providers while strengthening interprofessional collaboration and communications. Examples of such statements include:

- > **Aware of interaction with ___ and will monitor with patient; please dispense as written**
- > **This is a new increase in dosage**
- > **This is a new decrease in dosage**
- > **Aware of drug allergy to ___ and have advised patient to monitor; please dispense as written**

1 The Canadian Medical Protective Association, February 2014

2 Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care website <http://health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/drugs/medscheck/>

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How does this involve you – the rheumatologist and the pharmacist?

While the MedsCheck program is not new to Ontario pharmacists, rheumatologists may be unfamiliar with it but will soon recognize this medication review service as integral for positive health outcomes for their patients. Complexity of care and declining rates of medication adherence are significant and frequent challenges that are well-known to physicians and pharmacists alike. Increased collaboration between rheumatologists and pharmacists will help demystify complex treatment regimens, facilitate message consistency and foster greater rates of medication adherence while simultaneously streamline communications and strengthen relationships between busy health professionals.

With this partnership, rheumatologists are encouraged to direct their newly referred patients to their community pharmacists to receive a MedsCheck medication review prior to their initial appointment. Pharmacists can therefore expect to receive directed patient referrals from rheumatologists for a MedsCheck Annual Review; if applicable, a MedsCheck Follow-Up Review would be performed if a MedsCheck Annual had already been provided. In either case, the patient will have an accurate, up-to-date and complete MedsCheck Personal Medication Record for their visit with their rheumatologist.

Highlighting the importance of the MedsCheck program not only supports the provision of high quality patient care, but is an excellent way to promote the important and evolving role of Ontario pharmacists within the broader healthcare community. The Ontario Pharmacists Association and the Ontario Rheumatology Association recognize the importance of inter-professional patient-focused care and are pleased to lead the way toward greater integration between the province's healthcare providers for the benefit of all Ontario residents and the broader healthcare system.

For more information on this collaboration, please contact:



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