

Media Release

Modernizing the Drug Act: Steps in the right direction

Canadians need access to safe and effective prescription medications

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For Immediate Release

TORONTO – CTAC supports the direction taken by the government in modernizing the food and drug regulation to recognize the complex nature of drug regulation pre and post approval for sale in Canada.

Health Canada has been doing public consultations across the country for several years about its prescription drug and medical devices modernization plan. Following the recent completion of three days of consultations, Louise Binder, Chair of CTAC notes that: “Health Canada is setting a realistic bar to measure risk-benefit in approving drugs and in monitoring their effectiveness in real-world context.” “Health Canada recognizes that there is no medication that is absolutely safe for all people at all times and also recognizes that different patient populations require discrete risk-benefit analysis depending on the severity of the disability or illness in question.”

Health Canada has also updated its post-market monitoring of drugs to ensure a range of options based on the results of the use of these drugs in different populations. It recognizes that we cannot learn everything about a drug and its safety and effectiveness in a clinical trial and that it is important to track drugs once they are marketed to the broad population. “The post approval surveillance of marketed drugs is the only way to ensure that the safety and efficacy found in trials continue with long-term use and in populations not involved in the trials” says Colleen Price, Secretary of CTAC.

Through the new legislation, Health Canada will continue to strongly limit advertising to the consumers which is of no benefit in providing objective education and information, but only increases pharmaceutical company profit. “The HIV community has long been against direct to consumer advertizing which has the potential to undermine the health care decisions of people living with HIV” confirms Ron Rosenes, Vice-Chair of CTAC.

We trust that the federal government will re-introduce the previously tabled bill C-51, amendments to the Food and Drug Act at the earliest opportunity. “Health Canada is taking the right steps to ensure safety and efficacy of drugs is carefully reviewed and monitored in Canada” concludes Binder.

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The Canadian Treatment Action Council (CTAC) is a national non-governmental organization run by and for people living with HIV/AIDS, including those who are co-infected. CTAC promotes informed public policy and builds awareness on issues that impede access to treatment and health care for people living with HIV/AIDS. Treatment is a broad concept, which includes western, traditional, complementary and alternative medicine.