

Opinion | Kawartha Lakes pharmacist urges people to not stock pile medication

Mike Cavanagh

We are all facing an unprecedented time and being asked to act and live differently than most of us have ever had to before. Obviously, this can be both scary and confusing to everyone.

On Tuesday (March 17, 2020), we heard of new direction from the province of Ontario to close bars, restaurants and numerous other business.

However, during this time, one thing will remain open – your local neighborhood pharmacy.

Pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and our support staff know and understand that our service is essential, and no matter the circumstance, we will do everything in our powers to remain open and provide care. Our Code of Ethics states that “[pharmacists] in emergency situations, including pandemics and other public health emergencies where the health of the patient or the public is at risk, have a duty to provide patient care within their professional competence and expertise.”

Every pharmacy is taking steps to support the health and safety of their staff and the patients they serve. To help with these measures, I would ask all patients to consider the following when or if you are considering visiting your pharmacy and pharmacist:

1. If you are unwell, try to not physically come into the pharmacy. Please call your pharmacist. If you need medications, ask about delivery. If you are concerned that you may have the symptoms of COVID-19 please visit the websites provided by the Ministry of Health or call Telehealth at 1-866-797-0000.
2. If you are elderly, frail or immunocompromised, try to avoid the pharmacy if possible. Again, speak to the pharmacy about phone consults and delivery to help assist your needs.
3. Do not consider stockpiling medications or try to get longer than the usual allowable supply, which is typically three months. Manufacturers, wholesalers and pharmacies are all working collaboratively to ensure the supply chain of medications is stable during the pandemic. Stocking up on medications will only add stress to the system, and could prevent someone else from being able to receive the same medication;
4. Please be patient, courteous and respectful with the hard-working staff at your pharmacy. All pharmacy staff are doing their best during this unusual time, and information is changing by the hour.

The important thing to remember is that your pharmacist will be available for you – by phone, by internet, or in-person if it’s appropriate. We are the most accessible healthcare providers, and we will remain accessible during the pandemic.

Finally, and this might be a little self-serving and selfish, but if you get a chance, thank your pharmacist and the pharmacy team. We are also not immune to the stresses of the pandemic, and sometimes it's nice to be reminded that our efforts are recognized.

Stay safe and stay healthy. And when you need us, we will be there for you.

Mike Cavanagh is the owner of Kawartha Lakes Pharmasave and the past chair of the Ontario Pharmacists Association.