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GEORGETOWN'S OWN NEWSPAPER

THE
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Rx revamp big headache

BY FRANCES NIBLOCK
 The Georgetown Gemini

Some Georgetown seniors are temporarily going without their medication, many senior citizens have been misclassified, and all pharmacists are doing a lot of explaining. That's the fallout after six weeks under the new Ontario Drug Benefit Program.

Under the new program, single senior citizens with an income under \$16,018 and married seniors with an income of \$24,175 or less, now pay a \$2 payment for every prescription they have filled.

A single senior with an income of more than \$16,018 now pays the first \$100 in prescription costs and after that a maximum \$6.11 dispensing fee on every prescription they have filled in the year.

Married seniors with a combined income of more than \$24,175 each must now pay the first \$100 in prescription costs and after that, an Ontario Drug Benefit dispensing fee of a maximum \$6.11. Prior to this anyone over 65 years of age had their prescriptions paid for fully by the government.

All of the Georgetown pharmacists surveyed reported problems with people being wrongly classified as having to pay the \$100, and then trying to get that money back. The pharmacists at Young's, Shoppers Drug Mart and Wal-Mart also report that they are spending a lot of time explaining to seniors how the new program works and then, in some cases, dealing with their anger and frustration.

The government has at least 5 per cent of seniors in the wrong income category, but judging by the number of reclassification forms being handed out by Georgetown pharmacists, that number is too low.

Neil Young, pharmacist and owner of Young's Pharmacy on Main Street and the Medical Centre Pharmacy, said some seniors are "upset, unhappy and confused" with the new drug benefit program.

"Most people have come to realize that they are having to accept some responsibility for their own health, but unfortunately, whether you agree with it or not, nobody wants to pay," Young explained on Monday, noting there is a mis-conception that the pharmacist is getting more money from the patient.

"People are also concerned about getting their money back if they were mis-classified and wrongly paid the \$100. We've had three different messages from the Ministry (of Health) saying first that seniors would not get their money back, then that they would get up \$25, and then that everyone would get the whole amount, less their deductible," Young said.

"Our biggest problem is that it's taking us an awful lot longer to explain the new system to people. It's very confusing for patients and it's very confusing for pharmacists."

Young also said they had noticed a substantial reduction in prescription volume for seniors but were unsure if

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ARTS ALIVE! Betty Worobec ushers her crew in to look at the handmade jewelry at Bunny Safari's Mystical Makings at Art In The Afternoon downtown last Friday and Saturday. From left: Worobec, Sarah Huebert, 4, Emily Fisher, 10 and Kathryn Huebert, 7. (Jamie Harrison photo)

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