

This resolution was NOT ADOPTED at national level. No action can be directed to the federal level. This resolution has a provincial component that can be acted on as a private citizen; you may state you are a CWL member but you cannot state you are writing on behalf of a CWL council, nor can you write to government using League letterhead.

## Education and Health

### St. Boniface/Notre Dame de Lorette

#### Resolution 2014.03      Expiry Dates on Prescription Labels

- Whereas,** Labeling on prescribed medications in Canada currently does not require declaration of the expiry date of the medication; and
- Whereas,** Inclusion of the medication's expiry date on the prescription label, as taken from the packaging of the pharmacy's inventory, can be the guide in purging outdated prescriptions from home medicine cabinets; therefore, be it
- Resolved,** That Manitoba Provincial Council in 2014 annual convention assembled, through the national council of The Catholic Women's League of Canada, urge the federal government to implement mandatory declaration of the expiry date on prescription labels; and be it
- Resolved,** That the Manitoba Provincial Council of The Catholic Women's League of Canada, urge the Manitoba provincial government to implement mandatory declaration of the expiry date on prescription labels, and be it further
- Resolved,** That this resolution be forwarded to the national council of The Catholic Women's League of Canada, for consideration at the 2014 annual national convention.

#### BRIEF      Expiry Dates on Prescription Labels

"Today, millions of Canadians rely on non-prescription and prescription drugs to maintain and improve their health." (Canada Gazette) Labeling on prescribed medications in Canada currently does not require declaration of the expiry date of the medication; "For drugs and natural health products, an "expiry date" indicates the shelf life and the stability of the product." (Badgut) "For the vast majority of drugs, the legislation only stipulates the testing procedures that must go into determining shelf life, leaving it up to the manufacturer to submit what they believe to be a reasonable variance in the potency and efficacy of each product. The approved shelf life of a specific drug, therefore, may be based on any of a wide variety of criteria, including stability of active ingredients over time or maintenance of potency beyond the expiry date by a high percentage of the product." (ibid) Unfortunately, when pharmacies draw from their stock to fill a prescription, there is no requirement to include the expiry date of that medication on the prescription label.

"Health Canada has an important and early role in product and label review." (Canada Gazette) "...the current *Food and Drug Regulations* (Regulations) contain requirements for industry regarding drug labelling and packaging .... (ibid) "The existing *Food and Drug Regulations* do not yet take into account ways to better reflect current knowledge of medication use and ways to minimize opportunities for confusion with labels, packages or names." (ibid)

"Drug safety and the communication of information to support the safe and effective use of drugs is a complex issue involving many stakeholders in the health system. Drug labels, including affixed and

supplementary information such as a package inserts and patient leaflets, are one of the primary vehicles for communicating important information to health professionals, patients and consumers about the safe and proper use of drugs. Evidence has demonstrated that the design of drug labels, packages and names, including format and colour, contribute to the safe and appropriate use of a drug and are important aids in identification, selection and administration." (Canada Gazette) In addition to the aforementioned, inclusion of the medication's expiry date on the prescription label, as taken from the packaging of the pharmacy's inventory, can be the guide in purging outdated prescriptions from home medicine cabinets.

Unused and expired medications can be returned to pharmacies through the Medications Return Program administered by the Health Products Stewardship Association. (Canada - MRP) Most provinces in Canada subscribe to the program. "When you drop off your medications, you'll not only ensure they're disposed of properly – you'll also keep them out of the wrong hands, preventing abuse or accidental ingestion – and protecting our environment in the process." (ibid) "If you look in your medicine cabinet, chances are you'll find medications that are expired or that you no longer need." (ibid)

*Standards of Practice* of The Manitoba Pharmaceutical Association require that "All expired drugs and health care products must be removed from the area of sale..." and that "All drugs and medical devices for disposal shall be rendered unusable and disposed of in accordance with federal and provincial laws, and regulations relating to hazardous waste materials." "While it is simple to find the expiry date on the package of over-the-counter medications, when you have a prescription filled at a pharmacy, often your medication is no longer in the manufacturer's container." (Badgut) Inclusion of the medication's expiry date on the prescription label as taken from the packaging of the pharmacy's inventory, can be the consumer's guide in knowing the potency and efficacy of one's prescription as well as being the guide for purging outdated prescriptions from home medicine cabinets. Federal and provincial legislation requiring mandatory declaration of the expiry date on prescription labels can ensure safer handling and disposal of medications.

## **WORKS CITED      Expiry Dates on Prescription Labels**

1. Altschuler, Richard. "Do Medications Really Expire?" *Rense*. Rense. Web. 28 Jan. 2014.  
<http://rense.com/general29/fom.htm>
2. "Best Before and Expiry Dates for Food and Drugs." *Badgut Gastrointestinal Society*. Canadian Society of Intestinal Research. Web. 28 Jan. 2014.  
<http://www.badgut.org/information-centre/health-and-nutrition/best-before-and-expiry-dates-for-food-and-drugs-1.html>
3. "Regulatory Impact Analysis Statement." *Canada Gazette*. Vol. 147, No. 25. Government of Canada, 22 June 2013. Web. 13 May 2014.  
<http://www.gazette.gc.ca/rp-pr/p1/2013/2013-06-22/html/reg2-eng.html>
4. "College of Pharmacists of Manitoba, Vision/Mission/Values." *College of Pharmacists of Manitoba*. College of Pharmacists of Manitoba. Web. 28 Jan. 2014.  
<http://mpha.in1touch.org/site/mission?nav=about>
5. "What to do with Expired Medication." Dr. Marla Shapiro. *Dr. Marla and Friends*. CTV News. 28 Jan. 2014. Television.  
<http://www.ctvnews.ca/ctv-news-channel/dr-marla-friends/episode-4-is-it-safe-to-use-expired-medication-1.993551#ixzz2Hd2eAnCa>
6. "Drug Expiration Dates – Do They Mean Anything?" *The Harvard Medical School Family Health Guide*. Health Harvard. Web. 28 Jan. 2014.  
<http://www.health.harvard.edu/fhg/updates/update1103a.shtml>

7. "Guidance Document Labelling of Pharmaceutical Drugs for Human Use." *Health Canada*. File number: 13-118352-592. Health Canada. 10 Jan. 2014. Web. 13 May 2014.  
[http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dhp-mpps/prodpharma/applic-demande/guide-ld/label\\_guide\\_ld-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dhp-mpps/prodpharma/applic-demande/guide-ld/label_guide_ld-eng.php)
8. Kramer, Thomas MD. "Do Medications Really Expire?" *Medscape Multispecialty*. Medscape General Medicine 2003. Web. 30 Jan. 2014. <http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/460159>
9. "Medicines Recommended for Disposal by Flushing." *US Food and Drug Administration*. US Department of Health and Human Services. Web. 30 Jan. 2014.  
<http://www.fda.gov/drugs/resourcesforyou/consumers/buyingusingmedicinesafely/ensuringsafeuseofmedicine/safedisposalofmedicines/ucm186187.htm>
10. "Policy on Manufacturing and Compounding Drug Products in Canada." *Health Products and Food Branch Inspectorate*. Health Canada. Web. 28 Jan. 2014.  
[http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dhp-mpps/compli-conform/gmp-bpf/docs/pol\\_0051-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dhp-mpps/compli-conform/gmp-bpf/docs/pol_0051-eng.php)
11. "Manitoba." Health Products Stewardship Association. Canada. N.p. n.d. Web. 13 May 2014. <http://www.healthsteward.ca/returns/manitoba>
12. "Standards of Practice, Community." *The Manitoba Pharmaceutical Association*, The Manitoba Pharmaceutical Association. 1-6. Web. 28 Jan. 2014.  
<http://mpha.in1touch.org/uploaded/38/web/SofP%20Community.pdf>

#### **ACTION PLAN      Expiry Dates on Prescription Labels**

1. Annually purge medicine cabinets of unwanted expired medicines by bringing them to the nearest participating pharmacy for environmentally safe disposal.
2. Invite guest speakers with pharmaceutical experience.
3. Write letters to federal and provincial governments, urging implementation of mandatory declaration of the expiry date on prescription labels.
4. Monitor the government's plan of action in response to the request contained in the resolution.