

Chain drug stores support measures to thwart spread of meth abuse

TORONTO, December 7, 2005 -- The Canadian Association of Chain Drug Stores (CACDS) applauds the recent recommendation by the National Drug Scheduling Advisory Committee (NDSAC) to reschedule specific cold medicines in an effort to combat the problem of methamphetamine before it spreads any wider.

NDSAC has recommended that products containing pseudoephedrine and ephedrine ingredients, which are used to illegally manufacture methamphetamine, be rescheduled in an effort to restrict their access. It has recommended that products containing single-entity pseudoephedrine be moved behind the pharmacy counter (Schedule II) and products with combination ingredients be sold in pharmacy only (Schedule III) but can still be self-selected.

“CACDS is concerned about the growing problem of methamphetamine in Canada and we have been anticipating decisions like this to restrict access to methamphetamine precursors,” says Christina Bisanz, president and CEO of CACDS.

She adds that while CACDS prefers not to see restricted access to products and inconvenience many consumers who rely on them for legitimate, self care purposes, the association supports the move as a preventative response to a unique social situation. As the most accessible health care providers who have a track record in assisting in public health and safety initiatives, Bisanz says that chain pharmacies are well positioned to support communities that are struggling to deal with methamphetamine abuse, and to prevent its further spread.

“Based on available information to date, including from the RCMP, there isn’t sufficient evidence to show that methamphetamine precursor ingredients are *currently* being diverted from retail sources in any significant way. However, we recognize that this does not preclude the potential for the situation to become a problem at the retail level and we will support measures to pre-empt the illicit diversion of meth ingredients from retail outlets,” says Bisanz.

CACDS believes that eradicating the problem requires a multi-faceted and fact-based approach by many stakeholders, including prevention and treatment, education and awareness, tougher penalties for offenders and controls in place to ensure the proper use of products that contain ingredients used to produce methamphetamine.

Last year, CACDS collaborated with others in the retail sector who sell and manufacture methamphetamine precursor ingredients—NDMAC and the Retail Council of Canada

with Health Canada and the RCMP as observers—to establish, develop and implement *Meth Watch*, a proactive, community-based education program as a preventive approach. The *Meth Watch* program is now being implemented by a growing number of retail stores, pharmacies and community groups across the country. CACDS recently established a relationship with the national Council on Drug Abuse (CODA) to support delivery of its education program *Between Life & Death: The Crystal Meth Explosion* in schools across the country.

As federal and provincial governments and other stakeholders seem increasingly intent on restricting access to pseudoephedrine- and ephedrine-containing products (notably several of the western provinces), CACDS and its members feel a responsibility to support efforts that will ultimately ensure a nationally consistent and coordinated approach.

“Many of our chain members operate pharmacies in more than one region of Canada, and the creation of a pan-Canadian approach will not only address the methamphetamine abuse problem, it will do so without creating a patchwork quilt of confusing, conflicting and possibly costly product restriction provisions,” says Bisanz.

CACDS is the national association representing community chain pharmacy in Canada. Its 22 retail member companies represent 74 per cent, or over 5,600 community pharmacies in traditional drug stores and grocery and mass merchandise stores. CACDS members employ more than 97,000 Canadians.

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Canadian Association of Chain Drug Stores
Association Canadienne des chaînes de pharmacies

The Voice of Community Pharmacy in Canada

La voix de la pharmacie communautaire au Canada

Backgrounder

CACDS takes national approach to address the methamphetamine problem in Canada

The Canadian Association of Chain Drug Stores (CACDS) believes that all stakeholders, community groups, health care professionals and governments have a responsibility to address the problem of illicit production and abuse of methamphetamine in Canada.

We support a coordinated, multi-faceted and fact-based approach, including prevention and treatment, education and awareness, tougher penalties for offenders and controls in place to ensure the proper use of products that contain ingredients used to produce meth. As the most accessible health care professionals who have a track record in assisting in public health and safety initiatives and who are based in the communities that are struggling to deal with methamphetamine, community pharmacy can support governments in responding to the broader public health and safety implications.

Following is an account of the action taken, starting in early 2004, by CACDS and its members to address the problem on a national basis:

Support for Education and Prevention Programs

CACDS took the initiative to help address the problem of methamphetamine by collaborating with others in the retail sector who sell and manufacturers of methamphetamine precursor ingredients. We joined with NDMAC and the Retail Council of Canada, with Health Canada and the RCMP as observers, to establish, develop and implement Meth Watch, a proactive, community-based education program.

CACDS continues to support Meth Watch and encourage retail members to participate in the program throughout Canada.

CACDS has established a relationship with the national organization, Council on Drug Abuse (CODA). Together with NDMAC, CACDS is working closely with CODA to support delivery of its education program: *Between Life & Death: The Crystal Meth Explosion*, in schools across the country.

In addition to Meth Watch, some CACDS retail members have developed their own in-store education materials and education programs.

Support for restricted access to meth precursors

In Alberta, CACDS members voluntarily complied with a request from the Alberta College of Pharmacists in June, 2004, to move single ingredient pseudoephedrine-containing products behind the pharmacy counter in all their stores in the province.

In August, 2005, CACDS formally adopted the position to support F/T/P governments who choose to reschedule products containing multi-entity methamphetamine precursors pseudoephedrine and ephedrine into Schedule III (professional products area of pharmacy), and single-entity pseudoephedrine and ephedrine products into Schedule II (no public access).

Some CACDS members have voluntarily introduced restrictions on the quantity of sales of products containing meth precursor ingredients.

Some CACDS retail members have adopted a company policy to voluntarily move single-ingredient pseudoephedrine-containing products to behind the pharmacy counter in their stores.

Supplying intelligence to quantify the problem, help governments and other stakeholders make informed decisions

CACDS is considering other options that offer F/T/P governments the benefit of community pharmacy's existing resources. CACDS is working with the Public Health Agency of Canada to establish a program in which retail members who have the technology will share aggregate data on the sale of pseudoephedrine and ephedrine-containing products, which would allow authorities to track suspicious activity in specific communities nationally.

CACDS has continually arranges meetings with and supplies written information to ensure politicians and their staff as well as other pharmacy stakeholders are informed of the issue in advance of decision-making and discussion, such as:

- Submission to support and outline community chain pharmacy's perspective regarding Health Canada's proposed amendments to the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and the Precursor Control Regulations.
- Letter to Health, Justice and other ministers of the four western provinces in advance of their June 10 summit on methamphetamine
- Meetings with the Solicitor Generals and Health Ministers of the four western provinces
- Meeting with the Registrars of the provincial Colleges of Pharmacy and NAPRA
- Meetings with federal parliamentarians and policy advisors to promote awareness of the issue, and the various measures being advanced by CACDS on a national basis
- Ongoing media relations, including a national media conference in BC to launch the Meth Watch program, in November 2004