

About this Newsletter

This monthly newsletter is coordinated and published by ISIS. Our main goal is to keep International Medical Graduates informed about new programs, events, and initiatives related to the medical field and healthcare system in Nova Scotia.

Province Announces Plan to Get Fair Drug

Nova Scotians covered by Pharmacare will soon pay lower prices for most generic drugs at the counter as the result of new legislation introduced on April 11. The Fair Drug Pricing Act will allow government to regulate the cost of generic drugs under the Pharmacare programs, leading to better drug prices for Nova Scotians covered by Pharmacare and a better deal for taxpayers.

"As part of our commitment to make life better for families, we want to ensure Nova Scotians are able to get the drugs they need at a fair price they deserve," said Minister of Health and Wellness Maureen MacDonald. "This plan will help ensure the Pharmacare programs, which provide critical help with drug costs to 220,000 Nova Scotians, remain sustainable."

Starting July 1, a cap will be set on the price of generic drugs, based on the price of equivalent brand drugs under the Pharmacare programs, and will be phased in over one year as follows:

- July 1: a cap of 45 per cent will be put in place
- Jan. 1, 2012: the cap will move to 40 per cent
- July 1, 2012: the cap will be 35 per cent

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"We're pleased to see government making changes to make drugs more affordable for seniors and other Nova Scotians," said Bill VanGorder, president, Group of IX Seniors' Organizations. "Seniors count on seniors' Pharmacare, so these efforts to rein in the program's costs are extremely important to ensure it remains in place."



"Based on what we heard during consultations and our own research, we developed the best plan for Nova Scotia, a plan that is fair to all," said Ms. MacDonald. "We are phasing it in to make sure Nova Scotians are able to get the services they count on from pharmacists in their communities."

The fair drug pricing regulations, which support the fair drug pricing plan, will be finalized in June and go into effect July 1.

For information on the province's Fair Drug Prices plan, visit www.gov.ns.ca/health/fairdrugprices

Residency Positions Filled on First Match

For the first time in a number of years, all of the Dalhousie Family Medicine sites were filled in the first round of the national CaRMS match. Dalhousie was one of only three Canadian universities to fill their Family Medicine programs in the first round. In total, Dalhousie filled 43 Canadian Medical Graduate (CMG) positions and 6 International Medical Graduate (IMG) positions.

This year they had more applicants than in previous years. File reviewers assessed almost five hundred files; interview teams consisting of a faculty member and a resident interviewed approximately two hundred and fifty CMG applicants on the cross-Canada road shows and at the interview day in Halifax in late January. Fifty-eight IMG applicants participated in the Multiple Mini Interview. The Selection



Committee, with resident and faculty representation from each site, worked diligently to develop Rank Order Lists for both CMG's and IMG's in a process that has evolved over many years. To read more please go to : <http://family.medicine.dal.ca/news.html>

Canada to Remain Short of Doctors

Canada's physician supply will continue to suffer from misguided government policies set in the 1990s restricting medical school enrollment, an article published on May 9, 2011 by the Fraser Institute says. It says Canada requires 2,256 to 2,339 new physicians a year from 2011 through to 2020 to maintain the current physician-to-population ratio. However, the numbers could be even higher given the aging physician population. Approximately 38

per cent of physicians were 55 years of age or older in 2010. The article says that without a substantial addition of internationally trained doctors, the Canadian physician-to-population ratio will shrink in coming years.

The article, Canada's physician supply, can be accessed at www.fraserinstitute.org/research-news/research/display.aspx?id=17328

Helping Sick Kids Breathe Easier

If you've ever taken a small child to the doctor, you know it's not helpful that so many medical devices look so scary. That insight helped guide the development of the TremoFlo Oscillation Spirometer, which assesses lung function. Created by Thorasys Medical Systems of Halifax, the TremoFlo is a respiratory medical device that also looks pretty friendly.

Geoff Maksym, an associate professor at the Dalhousie University School of Biomedical Engineering, is the company's chief scientific adviser and was a member of the team that developed the new equipment.

It uses a new technology, one that makes it easier for asthmatic patients to get their airflow checked by reducing the huffing and puffing required.

"The patient doesn't have to push the air, as with a traditional device," said Maksym. "The device does the pushing, rather than the person."

The patient can barely feel it, he said. That's a significant plus, and it's an innovation that has already helped the company attract positive attention. Not bad for a device that isn't being sold yet.

As for its user-friendliness, Maksym said the first version of the TremoFlo didn't look quite as approachable as the current one. He and his colleagues knew, though, that appearances matter in designing medical equipment.

"So we approached a professor at (the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design), Glen Hougan," Maksym said. "He's more of a designer and an expert on how people interact with technology and equipment. We asked him to help us with the look and feel of it." Hougan spent time learning the requirements and specifications the project demanded. He watched people using the equipment, and the team gathered input from doctors

and medical technicians. Ultimately, Hougan made suggestions that the original design group could never have come up with on their own, Maksym said.

For example, Hougan created a prototype for children that look like an elephant. The child is asked to blow into the trunk, turning a potentially upsetting procedure into a fun moment.

Eric Crowell, director of the Saint Mary's University Business Development Centre, said entrepreneurs can take a lesson from this team when it comes to seeking a new perspective. "They showed a real ability to identify their possible blind spots, and they aggressively sought out experts who could help them address issues they wouldn't know how to tackle. That's a very smart approach."

"Knowing what you don't know," Crowell said, "is a skill we all need to cultivate, and it's great when you can close the gap by bringing in people who have the knowledge or experience your team needs."

To read the complete article in the Chronicle Herald please go to :

<http://thechronicleherald.ca/Business/1242436.html>



PCRC Important Notice to Candidates

As of July 1, 2011, PCRC will discontinue its transitional measure of providing a \$40 refund for a source verification request (SVR) (normally charged a \$100 fee) on a document that has already been source verified by the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG). Under the new policy, [source verification fees](#) for documents will be the same for "pre-verified" documents as for all other documents. The date used to determine whether a

particular SVR is eligible for a refund before the practice is discontinued will be the date upon which PCRC first submits the SVR to ECFMG. Those SVRs submitted to ECFMG on or after July 1, 2011, will no longer receive a refund.

To read more please go to :

www.pcrc.org/en/news/impnotice_40refund.shtml

Yield to Bus Legislation in Effect May 1, 2011

The province is taking steps to improve transit efficiency and safety with legislation that came into effect May 1, requiring drivers to yield the right of way to transit buses signaling their intention to re-enter the traffic stream.

"Currently, buses must rely on the courtesy of drivers to re-enter traffic. This legislation will provide clarity for all drivers while helping to reduce schedule delays," said Bill Estabrooks, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. "This legislation will make life better for all road users by improving public transit efficiency and safety."

This legislation was modeled after similar legislation in British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec. The



amendment was initially proposed in the fall 2007 sitting of the legislature as a Private Members Bill. Fines for failing to yield to a transit bus range from \$167 to \$340, including court costs.

To read more please go to :

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/tran/hottopics/yieldtobus.asp>

English for Healthcare Professionals Program

English for Healthcare Professionals program is an inter-disciplinary communication course for health-care professionals. This intensive course focuses on the language skills needed to practice effectively in a Canadian health-care work environment. The program started on April 11th with eleven participants and runs until July 29th, 2011.

Reading and summarizing are key requirements for IMGs and being able to practice these every day is a great real asset of the class. The idioms, lay language terms and slang are useful in understanding the patients during medical interviews. The diversity of the class provides IMGs with an understanding of the different perspectives on healthcare issues.

From the point of view of IMGs who have taken the program before, some of the benefits of the course are:

- improved communication skills
- a better understanding of the impact of culture on language, especially during the interaction with patients
- exposure to authentic culture and communication in the Canadian healthcare setting, especially through the outings once a week to healthcare service providers
- having opportunities to practice the language in real life situations

The next English for Health care Professionals class will be held in November 2011. Please contact Amanda Marshall at amarshall@isisns.ca for more information .

Orientation Session on National Assessment Collaboration (NAC) Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE)

Because there has been a great deal of interest to get more information about the National Assessment Collaboration (NAC) Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) on the part of IMGs, ISIS had an informational session on NAC on Tuesday, May 3rd.

Dr. Bruce Holmes, Learning Resource Centre (LRC) Executive Director, kindly accepted our invitation and attended the session to provide more information about the NAC assessment and answer the questions about whether/when it will be available in Nova Scotia. Natalie Auger, Program Manager for NAC in Ottawa, also answered questions through Skype.

The session was attended by twenty eight IMGs. Jan Kutcher, Employment Services and Workforce

Integration Manager, and Mohja Alia, Employment Specialist Team Lead, were also present at the session. Jan provided helpful clarifications and as usual she timely brought up some of the IMGs challenges in a way that was heard by the Program Manager of NAC. There was also a chance for the group to bring up some issues regarding IMGs time management during the LMCC exams which Natalie Auger, NAC Program Manager, said may be considered in evaluation surveys in the future. As Dr. Holmes announced in the session, NAC OSCE will be launched in Halifax in June 2012. Since this is a new decision, there is not yet much information available regarding the details of the exam in Halifax.

Healing Hands Mental Health Association Workshops

The Healing Hands Mental Health Association of Nova Scotia is a small association dedicated to the presentation of workshops and lectures on mental health issues and health issues relating to mental health. These workshops are open to the general public and are conducted by invited professionals.

This spring, Healing Hands Mental Health Association of Nova Scotia has been offering a series of Saturday morning workshops dealing with childhood/adolescent disorders. The presenters are university professors, psychiatrists, psychologists and other noted researchers in their respective areas. The workshops are conducted on Saturdays from 9:30am to 12:00noon on each scheduled date and are open to the general public: parents, grandparents, teachers, school counselors, resource teachers and other health-care providers who work with children and adolescents. The cost is \$10 per workshop.

The schedule of the future workshops is as follows:

May 14 — Dr. Sabina Abidi, Psychiatrist with IWK Hospital — Depression in School Going Children

June 4 — Dr. Virginia Walford, Psychologist with Roth Associates — Grieving and Grief Therapy For School Going Children

To register for this series of workshops or for individual sessions please email your contact information to hmhans@gmail.com or phone (902)479-4656. Please leave a voicemail if no is available to answer your call.

Venue: Bloomfield Centre, 2681 Agricola St., Halifax. The venue has a limit of 120 persons so to insure your space you should pre-register.

Those attending will be given a Certificate of Attendance.

NOTE: Source Book for those wishing to do further personal research:

Mash, Eric J. & Russell A. Barkley; Treatment of Childhood Disorders 3rd Edition; The Guildford Press, NY, 2006; ISBN-10 1-57230-921-0(soft-cover)



Nova Scotians Cautioned Against Blacklegged Ticks

As Nova Scotians enjoy the woods and parks this spring, they are reminded to take precautions against bites from blacklegged ticks that can cause Lyme disease. While the risk of contracting Lyme disease is low, there are many simple steps Nova Scotians should take to protect themselves and their families.

Checking for ticks, using DEET insect repellent, wearing light-colored clothing so that ticks are visible, and pulling socks over pant legs and tucking shirts into pants can all help.

Images of the blacklegged tick, instructions on removing ticks and general information on Lyme disease are available at www.gov.ns.ca/hpp.

Community Events

Film Series: "Miss Evers Boys"

Date: Friday May 20, 2011, 5 - 7:30 pm

Location: Tupper Building, Theatre A (also available at DMNB)

A monthly event presented by the Global Health Office, Department of Bioethics and Medical Humanities. This month's film and discussion is hosted by the Medical Humanities-HEALS Program. A panel representing Bioethics, African Canadians, Research, and Dr. David Feldshuh, who wrote the play upon which this film was based, will speak following the film. The movie is based on a true story of the US Government's 1932 Tuskegee Syphilis Experiments, in which a group of African American test subjects were allowed to die, despite a cure having been developed. For more information please contact: gho@dal.ca

Spiritual Diversity Conference

Date: June 2 - 4, 2011

The first Spiritual Diversity Conference and Fair will bring together people of all of the major faith traditions as well as presenters who will address the challenges and opportunities that religious diversity brings to our nation.

Conference: June 2 & 3, 2011

Fair: June 4, 2011

Location: St. Mary's University, Halifax, NS

For more information please contact: gho@dal.ca

We are looking for recommendations for new content and revisions to the current content. Please email your feedback to imgbridging@isisns.ca or call Sepideh Behroozan, IMG Bridging program Coordinator, at (902)406-8650.