



NEWS RELEASE

**For Immediate Release
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B.C.'s PharmaCare program is making only slow progress towards providing a program that is sustainable, ensures cost-effective drug use, and still provides B.C. residents with reasonable access to prescription drugs, says the Auditor General.

VICTORIA— Auditor General Wayne Strelieff released his report today on the second audit of the management of the PharmaCare drug reimbursement plan. The first was carried out in 1998, and Strelieff says major issues facing the PharmaCare program have not changed much.

“My conclusion is troubling because it echoes the earlier conclusion we reached on the PharmaCare program,” Strelieff writes in his 65-page report.

Although government has recently made major changes through the introduction of the Fair PharmaCare program, Strelieff says program management is still hampered by frequent turnovers of management, chronic understaffing and, a lack of clear direction, appropriate performance measures and key accountabilities. These are many of the same conclusions reached in 1998, he notes.

He also notes that although PharmaCare has been a leader in implementing some important initiatives, such as the PharmaNet system, and some cost containment and drug utilization strategies, it has still not expanded those strategies to make the best possible use of them.

The report makes 15 recommendations which Strelieff believes would help the program meet its goals. (*See separate sheet.*)

In its response, the Ministry of Health states that “we profoundly disagree” with the over-all conclusion that little progress has been made. It stresses the introduction of the new Fair PharmaCare system as well as efforts it is making on the national stage for greater co-operation between jurisdictions. It also describes current and future actions it is undertaking to implement most of the recommendations in the Auditor General’s Report.

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2005/06 Report #8 – Managing PharmaCare: Slow Progress Toward Cost-Effective Drug Use and a Sustainable Program.

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Auditor General Wayne Strelloff's 15 Recommendations for BC PharmaCare

Implementing a results-based approach

We recommend that the ministry:

1. Review PharmaCare's strategic objectives and make necessary adjustments to reflect current thinking.
2. Align PharmaCare strategic objectives with statements of actions that describe how the objectives are to be achieved.
3. Determine the human resources needed to achieve the program's objectives and build capacity to meet those needs.
4. Develop performance measures for, set targets for, and collect information on achievement of program objectives.
5. Work with the College of Pharmacists and others to move custodianship of PharmaNet information to the ministry, and provide timely access.
6. Formally evaluate the MAXIMUS BC contract on a regular basis, to determine its effectiveness.

Ensuring cost-effectiveness of drugs

We recommend that the ministry:

7. Review internal procedures for assessing the cost-effectiveness of new drugs to identify and implement ways to streamline the assessment process, including consideration of a fast-track process
8. Put in place a process to systematically assess the cost-effectiveness of existing drugs in the formulary.

Purchasing at a reasonable cost

9. Explore and implement ways to ensure best prices are paid for drugs by the province.

Promoting cost-effective prescribing practices and drug use

We recommend that the ministry:

10. Use PharmaNet information to identify trends in prescribing practices and to inform physicians about their own prescribing practices and the projected results had currently recognized clinical best practices been followed.
11. Significantly increase support for PharmaCare-sponsored programs that encourage appropriate drug use through physician best practices in prescribing (such as Therapeutics Initiative Letters, physician access to PharmaNet, and the academic drug detailing program).
12. Support greater involvement of physicians in developing actions to promote appropriate drug use.

Assessing eligibility of recipients

We recommend that the ministry:

13. Review Plan G – No-charge Psychiatric Medication Program and the supporting policy framework, to ensure they are consistent.
14. Ensure that eligibility criteria for Plan G – No-charge Psychiatric Medication Program are clear, and that eligibility is being assessed in accordance with the criteria.

Meeting accountability responsibilities

We recommend that the ministry:

15. In its annual report, move toward reporting in a manner consistent with the British Columbia reporting principles on the performance of the PharmaCare program.