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Canadian pharmacies helping Americans

By Elena Evans

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While the US government is arguing over the solutions about the rising costs of medications, many Americans still do not have access to their prescribed treatments. The newest brand name drugs are often the most expensive, and millions of Americans – especially elderly, have inadequate or no insurance coverage for drugs. Nearly a third of all Medicare beneficiaries have no financial protection for the costs of drugs, and 42% of those report not filling prescriptions for financial reasons.

Some Americans have decided to tackle the problem on their own. William Sinensky, a 68 year old retiree from California, is one of them. William is having a hard time paying for his medication - Bristol Meyer's Pravachol, the most famous drug to reduce cholesterol levels. Costco pharmacy, one of the cheapest US pharmacies sells a 3 months supply of Pravachol (40 mg) for 360 dollars. That is over \$1200 yearly just on one medication.

Having no insurance, William turned to Canada. There, he pays approximately \$250 for the same amount of medications. First he traveled across the boarder, now he gets his Pravachol by mail from AffordableDrugs - one of the leading Canadian pharmacies offering discounted drugs to Americans. "I save approximately 400 dollars on Pravachol per year. I've tried several Canadian online pharmacies and finally, found the one that fits me. They are efficient and I trust them."

Just as William, municipalities and even states are turning to their northern neighbor.

According to the Council of State Governments, thirteen state and seven local governments have plans or existing programs to import or facilitate the importation of drugs from Canada.

Wisconsin governor Jim Doyle is encouraging seniors to order from Canada and trying to import cheap medications for themselves. Other states, importing medications from Canada, are Connecticut, Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, and West Virginia.

Some local governments also encourage their citizens to turn to Canada for a solution. These cities include Boston (Mass.), Burlington (Vt.), Cambridge (Mass.), Montgomery (Ala.), Palm Beach County (Fla.)and Washington (D.C.).

With the reelection of George Bush, the final approval of the re-importation of drugs from Canada has never been farther. Health care costs are not a priority on the President' agenda and many critics

suggest that the new policies will only benefit the rich and the healthy. Unfortunately, the seniors and the underinsured will pay the price. The only helping hand comes from the Canadian pharmacies. " I wish everyone knew how easy and safe it is to order from Canada" says William, "All this talk about how Canadian medications will kill us is simply the pressure tactics from the big pharmaceutical companies. Canadian pharmacies are just as good as my local pharmacy, if not better."

For more information about AffordableDrugs please visit www.afforabledrugs.com or call toll free at 1 800 887 68 90.

None

Buying Drugs From Canada: Can It Last?

By Kirk A. Johnson

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Americans are embracing the modem and abandoning the motor vehicle in search of cheaper drug prices and Canadian pharmacies are the destination. The neighbor to the north has become the savior of the health-plan meek, and the cash mild, by filling their prescriptions for savings of up to 80%. Yet, while the willing Canadians share their good fortune of lower-priced drugs, unfriendly forces plot their demise. Doctors associations, pharma giants, and government agencies are doing their best to thwart this "humanitarian effort".

Canadian pharmacies, and especially their online counterparts, are flourishing in today's shop-at-home environment. The process of ordering prescription drugs is relatively simple. You find a web drug store you like, choose the prescription drugs you need, tally the cost in a shopping cart, fill out a questionnaire, then mail in, or fax, your prescription and signed consent form and presto – instant savings. For some, especially America's seniors, it also means not having to choose which drug you will have to forego this month, or the next.

So why is this seemingly win-win situation under so much pressure? For starters, because it's illegal. The FDA says the same drugs that have been approved in the U.S. but originate in Canada are considered unapproved new drugs and are therefore illegal for import. However, since it has previously allowed U.S. citizens to import needed drugs that are unavailable in the U.S., it has made exceptions for personal use drug imports.

For the FDA, the fact remains that the drugs are illegal. This is the position they are advocating with many U.S. governors, like Illinois governor Rod Blagojevich who has been contemplating Canadian drug reimportation in the face of U.S. law. Minnesota's governor Tim Pawlenty created a referral web site for residents to purchase drugs from two Canadian pharmacies it researched and has okayed. Growing numbers of states are seriously looking at reducing budgets or helping residents reduce the burden of high priced prescription meds through Canadian pharmacies.

Demand for Canadian prescription drugs is high, so what about supply. David McKay, head of the Canadian International Pharmacy Association, will meet with U.S. governors at their upcoming summit on drug importation to ask for their help with the large pharmaceutical companies. The pharma giants

Canadian pharmacies helping Americans

have begun restricting supply to Canadian pharmacies in an effort to quell the flow south. For the pharma giants, as the drugs flow south, so do their profits.

Canadian pharmacies have made a commitment to take care of Canadians first but there is a loud cry for their services across the border. Some critics accuse that it's all about money, and that Canadian online pharmacies are making a mint selling drugs to American citizens.

It was that same argument that the Canadian Medical Association (CMA) used when deciding to go after the doctors who are "chain-signing" prescriptions. When a prescription from an U.S. doctor comes to a pharmacy in Canada, the Canadian doctor reviews the patient's medical questionnaire along with the prescription received, and then writes out a new prescription for the drugs to be dispensed, according to Canadian law. The CMA says doctors should not sign prescriptions if the patient has not

been seen in a personal exam.

This type of professional peer pressure is the doctors lobby at stopping, or significantly slowing the process they feel hurts the profession. So far 1 Manitoba doctor has been fined \$10,000 for signing more than 9,000 prescriptions and 3 others accused of professional misconduct by the College of Physicians and surgeons.

With the recent Medicare changes so slow in coming, and so slow in creating any change, the need for aid from Canadian pharmacies will continue a good while longer. It is truly unfortunate that a service providing a "humanitarian effort", has more than its share of negative forces working against it. It begs the all-important question, "Can it last?" Only time will tell.

Kirk A. Johnson is the writer/publisher for the Online Pharmacy Digest <http://www.onlinepharmacydigest.com> . The premiere guide for consumers to the online pharmacy industry offers informative articles, current news, and web site reviews.



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