

CBC Report Outlines Corporate Pressure by Shoppers Drug Mart: How will this Impact Pharmacists?

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An [investigative report](#) published yesterday on CBC.ca reveals that former Shoppers Drug Mart (SDM) employees are alleging that intense pressure from SDM management is pushing pharmacists to conduct unnecessary MedsCheck calls. The story also references a July 2023 letter from eight SDM pharmacy owners to SDM leadership raising similar concerns and stating that the pressure to bill is “borderline abusive” and “creating safety concerns for the provision of good medical care to patients...”

Although the allegations are unproven (and have been denied by SDM), the story has already caused a huge stir in the pharmacy community, with many pharmacists feeling that the integrity of the profession as a whole has come under attack. There have also been a number of discussions taking place amongst pharmacists about their own experiences/accounts of corporate pressure in chain pharmacies and the growing trend of pharmacists leaving chains to open independent pharmacies.

In my experience, the vast majority of pharmacists are honest, hard-working people, who occupy an essential (and growing) role in the health-care ecosystem. In my opinion, pharmacists are also the most “accessible” of all regulated health professionals and their front-line commitment to patient care should be recognized and appreciated.

Unfortunately, stories such as this may cause patients to re-assess the conduct of their pharmacist and may lead to an increase in complaints to the Ontario College of Pharmacists (OCP). The Minister of Health has already responded by stating that the Ontario Government will be conducting its due diligence into matter, which could potentially result in an increased number of billing audits. Needless to say, both of these items would be highly unfavourable to pharmacists, as OCP complaints and billing audits are highly stressful, time consuming and require legal assistance. Further, they can also result in cautions/suspensions, notations on the OCP public register and demands for repayment.

In my view, the key takeaway from this story is that pharmacists need to keep in mind that they are responsible for their own actions and it is not an excuse to say that they were simply following instructions from their corporate head office. If inappropriate demands are being made, pharmacists should bring their concerns to their corporate head office, either individually, or as a collective.

Finally, hopefully this story creates a forum that brings attention to the invaluable work performed by pharmacists and the fact that corporate pressure should never trump ethical patient care. A PDF version of this blog is available to download [here](#).

For more information please contact: **Lad Kucis**

About the Author

Lad Kucis is certified by the Law Society of Ontario as a specialist in health law. As part of his practice, he provides advice and representation to pharmacists and other regulated health professionals regarding the full spectrum of regulatory/college matters, including complaints, investigations, discipline and appeals/reviews.

(This blog is provided for educational purposes only, and does not necessarily reflect the views of Gardiner Roberts LLP).

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