

KEEPING CURRENT

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Follow-Up CBC Report Outlines Corporate Pressure Exerted by Shoppers Drug Mart

By Lad Kucis

Founded in the 1920s, Gardiner Roberts LLP has grown to become a strategically placed mid-sized business law firm with a diverse client base which includes several of Canada's largest banks, public companies including mining, high tech and software companies, real estate enterprises, lenders and investors.

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In a [follow-report](#) released on March 14, 2024, the CBC states that it has received information from more than a dozen current and former Shoppers Drug Mart (SDM) pharmacists advising that the chain sets targets in respect of various professional services, including medication reviews.

To evidence the above claims, the CBC reports that it was provided with dozens of internal records, including various emails from SDM management regarding performance targets, the need to accelerate medication reviews and expressions of disappointment about poor performance.

Although SDM continues to deny the allegations, it is hard to ignore the claims being made, especially given the number of pharmacists that have come forward and the traction that the [original CBC report](#) generated in the pharmacist community. Furthermore, the Ontario College of Pharmacists (OCP) has already scheduled a series of virtual town halls about the pressures in performing services and meeting targets – and the CBC reports that the OCP has already

received over 4,000 responses to an anonymous survey on the issue.

To be frank, I do not think that anyone can be surprised that a publically-traded chain pharmacy, such as SDM, would be concerned about generating revenue. There is a significant difference, however, in trying to promote the sales of front shop items, such as beauty products or confectionaries, as opposed to encouraging the performance of potentially unnecessary, publicly-funded pharmacy services, such as medication reviews. Regarding pharmacy services, medical need, rather than profit, should be the only factor that determines the need for performance.

Pharmacists need to keep in mind that corporate management at chain pharmacies is not accountable to regulatory bodies, such as the OCP. Pharmacists must ensure that they always maintain professionalism, ethics and regulatory compliance in all of their actions. It is no excuse to take the position that they were following directions from head office, especially when they have derived a personal profit as a result.

It will be very interesting to see the next steps in this story, including whether there will be any additional reports from pharmacists and whether the OCP will be taking any steps to address this issue following its virtual town halls.

Please feel free to see my [comments](#) regarding the original CBC report.

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.

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