



April 20, 2018

To: Provincial and Territorial Medical Regulatory Bodies

Re: Regulation changes for methadone

The Canadian Society of Palliative Care Physicians applauds the federal, provincial and territorial governments and medical regulatory bodies for their efforts to curb the growing addiction issues arising from opioid misuse. Encouraging more physicians to learn about the use of - and have easier access to - methadone for the treatment of addiction will hopefully improve the availability of qualified physicians in management of opioid addiction. However, we are very concerned that the regulatory amendments to the [Controlled Drug and Substances Act](#) (CDSA), issued by Health Canada, removes the need for proof of education to qualify for a methadone prescribing exemption for the treatment of pain or use in opioid substitution for addiction.

Methadone is one of the medications prescribed by physicians for pain management, especially neuropathic pain. Due to its pharmacokinetics it is more complex to use than the other opioids. The availability of qualified physicians educated in the use of methadone for this purpose is limited and needs to improve to meet the needs of the populations we care for. Our ongoing concern continues to be the lack of non-pharmaceutical industry driven education available in pain management to undergraduate and postgraduate medical students. This is something that can and must be improved upon by engaging our medical schools to include the integration of Palliative Care core competencies - which includes pain management – into the mandatory medical school curriculum.

For the generations of physicians already in practice who lack this education, there is an excellent accredited free online course through Canadian Virtual Hospice - <http://www.methadone4pain.ca>. An accredited program such as this should be strongly recommended - if not made mandatory - to prescribe methadone for pain. We recommend mandating this education within your own province or territory as criterion for prescribing Methadone. We are also advocating that this be supported by Minister Petitpas Taylor and the provincial and territorial ministers of health.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss further, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Board of Directors:

Dr. J. David Henderson, President - drj davidhenderson@gmail.com

Dr. Leonie Herx, President-Elect
Dr. Anne Boyle, Treasurer
Dr. Stephanie Connidis, Secretary
Dr. Monica Branigan

Dr. Bruno Gagnon
Dr. Ebru Kaya
Dr. Stephen Singh
Dr. Anna Voeuk

Canadian Society of Palliative Care Physicians

*Suite 584
1A – 12830 – 96 Avenue
Surrey, BC V3V 0C2
T: (604) 341-3174; F: (604) 583-0645*