



Alberta Pharmacists' Association (RxA)

Position Statement – Inducements in the Practice of Pharmacy

Position

The Alberta Pharmacists' Association (RxA) opposes inducements in the practice of pharmacy.

Decisions regarding prescription medications and publicly funded professional pharmacy services should be based on clinical need, professional judgment, and the best interests of the patient—not financial incentives.

RxA recognizes that affordability, accessibility, convenience, and patient choice are important considerations within Alberta's healthcare system. Competition among pharmacies plays an important role in improving patient access and service delivery. However, decisions regarding prescription medications and publicly funded professional pharmacy services should remain based on clinical need rather than financial incentives.

For the purposes of this position statement, an inducement is any financial or non-financial incentive offered by a pharmacy to influence where a patient obtains prescription medications or professional pharmacy services. Examples include consumer loyalty or reward points, gift cards, cash, free goods, travel rewards, or other promotional incentives.

While inducements may appear to benefit individual patients, they have the potential to influence healthcare decisions based on financial incentives rather than clinical need, encourage unnecessary utilization of prescription medications and publicly funded professional pharmacy services, and increase costs to Alberta's publicly funded healthcare system.

As with other publicly funded healthcare services, patient decisions should be guided by clinical need—not commercial incentives. Albertans would not expect publicly funded healthcare services delivered by physicians, nurse practitioners, or other regulated healthcare professionals to be accompanied by consumer rewards or promotional incentives. RxA believes the same principle should apply to pharmacist-delivered care.



Why This Position Matters Today

Alberta has prohibited inducements in the practice of pharmacy since 2017. During that same period, pharmacy practice has evolved significantly. Pharmacists now provide a broad range of publicly funded professional pharmacy services, including patient assessment resulting in a prescribed medication, administering injections, medication management, and comprehensive care planning.

At the same time, Alberta's investment in community pharmacy has grown substantially. **Alberta's Drugs and Supplemental Health Benefits budget** now exceeds **\$2.2 billion annually** and includes funding for prescription medications, dispensing services, pharmacist-delivered clinical services, and an increasing number of high-cost specialty drug therapies.

As public investment in pharmacy services continues to grow, so does the responsibility to ensure publicly funded prescription medications and professional pharmacy services are utilized appropriately. Even relatively small changes in utilization driven by financial inducements have the potential to increase costs to Alberta's publicly funded prescription drug programs and pharmacy services without corresponding improvements in patient outcomes.

Rationale

RxA's position is founded on professional ethics, the responsible stewardship of publicly funded pharmacy services, maintaining public confidence in healthcare decision-making, and the lessons learned from Alberta's experience regarding the impact of inducements on patient care and healthcare utilization.

RxA supports a pharmacy practice environment where:

- **Decisions regarding prescription medications and publicly funded professional pharmacy services** are based on clinical need, professional judgment, and the best interests of the patient.
- **Pharmacists are recognized as trusted healthcare professionals** who provide ethical, patient-centred care, preserve continuity of care, and maintain public confidence through recommendations guided by patient need and therapeutic appropriateness.
- **Competition among pharmacies** is based on clinical excellence, accessibility, innovation, and the patient experience—not financial inducements—while ensuring the appropriate, sustainable, and accountable use of publicly funded pharmacy services and prescription drug programs.