Addressing the needs of our aging population in a new Health Accord

In 2015 for the first time in Canada’s history, persons aged 65 years and older outnumbered those under 15 years of age.¹

Our health care system must adapt to the changing needs of our aging population.

As the federal minister of health engages with the provinces and territories in the development of a new Health Accord, the CMA is highlighting areas in need of innovation.

Ensuring all Canadians can afford needed medication

Prescription medication is a critical part of a high-quality, patient-centred and cost-effective health care system. Canada stands out as being the only country with universal health care that does not have universal pharmaceutical coverage; as a result, all too many Canadians are doing without critical prescription medication due to cost.

Research done by the Angus Reid Institute found that over one in five Canadians (23%) reported that they or someone in their household did not take medication as prescribed because of the cost during the past 12 months.²³

Statistics Canada’s Survey of Household Spending reveals that spending on medication by households headed by a senior is the highest among all age groups. Despite provincial/territorial coverage, 12% of seniors report skipping medication due to cost.⁴

The CMA has long called on the federal government to implement a system of catastrophic coverage for prescription medication to reduce the cost barriers of treatment.

What is the CMA recommending?

The CMA recommends that the federal government establish a new funding program for catastrophic coverage of prescription medication.

This would be a positive step toward comprehensive, universal coverage for prescription medication.

What would this recommendation cost?

For 2017/18, research commissioned by the CMA estimates this would require a $1.57 billion federal investment.⁵

⁵ Conference Board of Canada. Research commissioned for the CMA, July 2015.