POSITION STATEMENT

Accessing and Reviewing Lab Test Results

Introduction

Ensuring that a patient’s medications are appropriate for them requires gathering information about the patient from a variety of sources. Pharmacists have the authority to access lab values to support them in carrying out this unique and critical responsibility in patient care.

Pharmacists are expected to identify those instances when seeking out lab values would be necessary to provide patient-centred drug therapy management. Not every patient interaction requires a review of lab values, but in addition to being a key component of the patient health record, lab information can in some cases be a critical element in effectively assessing the appropriateness of drug therapy.

SHARE (Secure Health Access Record) holds electronic health records for patients in Nova Scotia, including information regarding patient admissions, discharges, transfers, lab tests, diagnostic images, and clinical reports. SHARE is the primary portal by which health care professionals access lab results. Access to SHARE is available to community health care providers who complete the application process. Information regarding how to apply for SHARE Access for Community Pharmacists is available on the NS Department of Health and Wellness website.

Position

Pharmacists are encouraged to take all reasonable steps to obtain access to SHARE. Failing to acquire access to SHARE does not relieve a pharmacist of the responsibility to seek out and review the patient’s lab values in relevant situations when considering the initial and ongoing appropriateness of drug therapy.

Like any change in practice, incorporating the review of lab values into practice will involve professional judgment, critical analysis and collaboration. Some community pharmacists are already using SHARE to access their patients’ lab values in relevant situations, and their experiences may be useful to their peers. Professional judgment is required in determining when, to whom, and the manner in which lab results should be conveyed. The Standards of Practice: Testing supports pharmacists in making these decisions.

Pharmacists are reminded to ensure that they are competent to incorporate this aspect of patient care into their practice, taking advantage of educational resources when needed.

Resources

Resources that may be useful to pharmacists in meeting this obligation include:

- Canadian Pharmacists’ Association: Ordering, Monitoring and Interpreting Lab Tests to Optimize Medication Management
- Dalhousie Continuing Pharmacy Education: Integrating Lab Tests into Pharmacy Practice