

Professional Notice

To: Pharmacy Practitioners
From: Nova Scotia College of Pharmacists
Date: March 17, 2020; updated March 21, 2020; updated March 31, 2020
Re: Update: Urgent Message Re: Antiretroviral Rx

You have a central role in protecting the supply of critical medications at all times, and especially during a public health emergency. The public needs you to use this role now to intervene in a serious matter.

Infectious Disease (ID) at the Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA) is concerned that antiretroviral medications used for HIV/AIDS, including lopinavir/ritonavir (Kaletra), and/or hydroxychloroquine are being inappropriately prescribed to prevent and/or treat possible COVID-19 illness. They have firmly stated that if these drugs were prescribed, it would be for severely ill patients and on an experimental basis, and only then with the approval of an ID specialist. This message is being communicated to physicians and nurses as well.

Additionally, please note that most antiretroviral medications for HIV/AIDS are dispensed to patients by the QEII Health Sciences Centre, and it would be extremely unusual for a community pharmacy to receive a prescription for this indication.

Until further notice*, if you receive prescriptions initiating therapy for hydroxychloroquine and/or lopinavir/ritonavir or another antiretroviral medication, you are to advise the prescriber that the dispensing of these drugs is being monitored and that confirmation is required from ID before dispensing. Do not dispense these medications unless you receive this confirmation from ID.**

These actions are important to protect the supply of these medications for patients who critically need them, including those with HIV/AIDS.

The NSCP recognizes the great efforts that you are making during these unprecedented and challenging times. We are working diligently with Public Health and the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia (PANS) on many issues. Please continue to watch for communications from NSCP, PANS and Public Health as we navigate this evolving situation.

March 21, 2020: *Updated guidance from NSHA Infectious Disease is that confirmation is not needed prior to dispensing emtricitabine/ tenofovir (Truvada) as this is regularly used outside of Infectious Disease for HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis.**

March 31, 2020: NSCP, CPSNS and NSCN Joint Statement on the Unproven Therapies for COVID-19