



# Nova Scotia Prescription Monitoring Program

Annual Report 2022-2023

**Prescription Monitoring Program**

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## History and Background

The Nova Scotia Prescription Monitoring Program (NSPMP) was established in June 2005, following the proclamation of the Prescription Monitoring Act (approved in October 2004) along with the Prescription Monitoring Regulations. The legislation established a Prescription Monitoring Board to develop and operate the Program, which is currently administered by Medavie Blue Cross (MBC).

The objects of the Nova Scotia Prescription Monitoring Program (NSPMP) are to promote:

- The appropriate use of monitored drugs, and
- The reduction of abuse or misuse of monitored drugs

Preliminary work focused on the implementation of an on-line system to receive prescription information for a specified list of monitored drugs. By the end of 2007, all community pharmacies were submitting this information via the on-line system.

In April 2012, NSPMP launched eAccess, a key program development, in response to stakeholder requirements. An online portal for prescribers and dispensers of monitored drugs, eAccess permitted access to patient monitored drug dispense information during off-peak hours.

The NSPMP has continued to evolve and progress the program operation within its mandate. There was an expansion of monitoring activities in 2018 to integrate benzodiazepines into its collection of prescription dispensing data. There has also been development of monitoring activities on benzodiazepines, first prescription, drugs in combination, and a continued focus on opioid usage in the province. New drug utilization reviews have been launched, and work is ongoing with prescribers through the prescriber risk scoring and practice reviews.

The focus for 2022/2023 was the development of a new Strategic Plan. The Board spent multiple sessions prioritizing topics relevant to trends in prescribing monitored drugs, including the adaptation and innovative responses through the Covid-19 pandemic. The details of the Strategic Planning process are outlined further in this annual report.

## NSPMP Board Membership

**Ms. Beverley Zwicker, Chair**

CEO and Registrar, Nova Scotia College of Pharmacists

**Ms. Sue Smith, Vice-Chair**

CEO and Registrar, Nova Scotia College of Nursing

**Dr. Doug Mackey**

Registrar, Provincial Dental Board of Nova Scotia

**Dr. Gus Grant**

Registrar, College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia

**Mr. Doug Bungay**

Nova Scotia College of Nursing

**Dr. James Brady**

Provincial Dental Board of Nova Scotia

**Dr. Robert Strang**

Chief Medical Officer of Health, Department of Health and Wellness

**Dr. Samuel Hickcox**

Chief of the Office of Addictions and Mental Health

**Mr. Thomas Veinot**

Nova Scotia College of Pharmacists

**Dr. Zachary Fraser**

College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia

**Mr. Ronald Surette**

Public Member

**Ms. Sharon Johnson-Legere**

Public Member

### Strategic Priorities

Building on its core functions (data collection, case identification and information sharing), the NSPMP has focused its efforts on completing a new, robust Strategic Plan for the 2023-2026 period. This was accomplished by partnering with a professional consulting firm to assist with research, facilitation of Board discussions and drafting of a new plan.

Comprehensive research and jurisdictional scans were conducted, both across Canada and select areas in North American and Europe. Multiple interviews and surveys were conducted with various stakeholders to assess current trends and challenges associated with monitored drugs.

The Advisory Board Chair provided the following message to highlight the Program's mandate and goals for the 2023-2026 Strategic Planning cycle:

#### Message from the Chair of the Advisory Board

The Prescription Monitoring Association of Nova Scotia (PMANS) was incorporated in 1991 and since then has been operating a prescription monitoring program to monitor the prescribing and dispensing of specific narcotic and controlled drugs in Nova Scotia with the objective of curbing the overuse, misuse and diversion of these substances. In 2004, the Prescription Monitoring Act came into effect and the Nova Scotia Prescription Monitoring Program (NSPMP or 'The Program') was established.

Over the last 30+ years, society has evolved and so too has the NSPMP. The Prescription Monitoring Program has a history of evolution as it has adapted to changes in technology, enhancements to safe prescribing protocols and the need to better support those living with chronic pain and addiction.

The Covid-19 Pandemic has had far-reaching impacts on everyone, significantly impacting healthcare providers and the way the NSPMP delivers support. Through the pandemic, the Program adapted so that healthcare providers could continue to effectively and compassionately support Nova Scotians whose healthcare needs included the use of monitored drugs. From this, lessons were learned that can now be applied to our ongoing healthcare system challenges that require optimizing the use of our healthcare human resources.

As we look forward, the NSPMP is focused on building on our successes while continuing to look for ways to enhance the Program to meet the evolving needs of Nova Scotians related to monitored drugs. This Strategic Plan will focus the Program on providing

enhanced support for safe prescribing, increasing education efforts about the risks associated with monitored drugs, and positioning the Program as a trusted resource for government when discussing policy; and all of this in the context of being good stewards of the public trust as we work to optimize our efficiency and effectiveness in fulfilling our mandate.

Special thanks to the NSPMP Advisory Board who so generously lent their time, input, and expertise to this Strategic Plan.

Bev Zwicker



Chair, NS Prescription Monitoring Board

### Our Strategic Goals 2023-2026

The strategic priorities for 2023-2026 for the Nova Scotia Prescription Monitoring Program are to:

- Provide strategic support for prescribing monitored drugs to patients for acute, chronic, and long-term care needs.
- Increase public and professional awareness of how the NSPMP's mandate supports patient care, harm reduction and public safety.
- Position the Board as a primary resource for government on its policies related to monitored drugs.
- Optimize the efficiency and effectiveness of the Program.

**Goal: Provide strategic support for prescribing monitored drugs to patients for acute, chronic, and long-term care needs**

Monitored drugs are prescribed in the continuum of care to address the needs of patients:

- In acute care, the intervention is focused on the immediate, short-term needs.
- Some of these patients will transition to chronic care, where pain management can continue to form a critical part of their medical interventions.
- Medical intervention with monitored drugs for long term care may be a part of the transition from acute and chronic care.

All along the care continuum, strategic support in the form of guidelines and education concerning monitored drugs will assist the public and healthcare community in ensuring the most appropriate care for Nova Scotians.

**Goal: Increase public and professional awareness of how the Nova Scotia Prescription Monitoring Program (NSPMP) mandate supports patient care, harm reduction and public safety**

- Although the NSPMP has been active for some time, awareness of the Program is often overlooked or misunderstood.
- The NSPMP will explore various information channels to increase awareness and understanding of Nova Scotia's prescription monitoring program's role in supporting patient care, harm reduction and public safety.

**Goal: Position the Advisory Board as a primary resource for government on its policies related to monitored drugs**

- As the provincial government develops and evolves policies on monitored drugs, NSPMP's Advisory Board's depth of knowledge and experience will be invaluable in ensuring the government is well advised on issues, needs and potential solutions for Nova Scotians.

**Goal: Optimize the efficiency and effectiveness of the program**

- The NSPMP Administrator and the Advisory Board will work together to identify areas of potential improvement in the efficient delivery and optimized effectiveness of the Program in the interest of best serving Nova Scotians.

## Strategic Outcomes

The following chart provides the status of the goals for April 1, 2022-Mar 31, 2023:

Area	Year Outcomes (2022-2023)	Status			Comments
		Complete	In Progress	Pending	
Implement transition to Advisory. Determine Board member roles and accountabilities under new structure	Evaluation of the governance review and recommendations put forward to DHW.	X			Changes to Board operations to Advisory have been finalized and put into place.
	Work with DHW to scope changes/processes to transition.	X			Governance structure and Board Member roles were reviewed and finalized.
	Finalize approach to new strategic planning cycle	X			Decision was made to source a Facilitator for Strategic Planning session for Summer 2022. Facilitator was sourced, multiple sessions were held with the Board, as well as a number of collaborative surveys. Strategic Plans have been drafted and shared with the Board.
Develop Strategic Goals	Brainstorm and finalize key strategic items for 2023-2026 period	X			Decision was made to source a Facilitator for Strategic Planning session for Summer 2022.
	Post approved Strategic Plan on public facing NSPMP website		X		Facilitator was sourced, multiple sessions were held with the Board, as well as a number of collaborative surveys.
	Develop tactical/operational items to achieve the Strategic Goals.		X		Strategic Plans have been drafted and shared with the Board.



<b>Financial</b>	On an ongoing basis, the Board will be provided overview of program financials for transparency and visibility	<b>X</b>		With the shift of the Board from Governance to Advisory, the Board has continued to receive financial updates for visibility into financial operations of the Program.
<b>Data Integrity/ Infrastructure</b>	Collaborate with the Drug Information System to ensure the NSPMP receives prescription data that is accurate, timely and effectively integrated into the NSPMP System	<b>X</b>		NSPMP continues to meet regularly with the DIS to discuss and resolve issues related to data integrity.
	Introduction of the monitoring of Tramadol to take effect March 31, 2022	<b>X</b>		Tramadol effectively added to monitoring systems and dispenses flowing correctly.
	Development and deployment of a new DUR for Tramadol	<b>X</b>		NSPMP successfully developed new DUR criteria for algorithm input into system. A new Tramadol DUR effectively deployed Jan 1, 2023
<b>Data Analysis</b>	Development of new Tramadol criteria for DUR	<b>X</b>		Criteria was established for Tramadol based on existing DUR parameters. Multiple trials were performed and run. Successfully loaded into system to generate first Tramadol DUR run effective Jan 1, 2023.

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<b>Information Sharing/ Stakeholder Relations</b>	Continue to incorporate best practice key messages on prescribing monitored drugs into communications with prescribers, pharmacists, and stakeholder groups.	<b>X</b>			Reference to key guidelines and practice supports have been outlined in correspondence, presentations and continue to be relayed in day-to-day outreach activities.
	Maintain and enhance, where possible, the NSPMP's relationship with law enforcement.	<b>X</b>			NSPMP continue to be active member of newly formed Chief of Police Association Drug Committee and contribute to effective discussions and presentations.
	NSPMP invited to present to a variety of external stakeholder groups and educational institutions	<b>X</b>			See chart at the end of this document for list of presentations.
<b>Brand/ Reputation</b>	Maintain and enhance, where possible, the NSPMP relationship with law enforcement.	<b>X</b>			NSPMP continue to be active member of newly formed Chief of Police Association Drug Committee and contribute to effective discussions and presentations.
	NSPMP invited to present to a variety of external stakeholder groups and educational institutions.	<b>X</b>			NS Practice Ready Group, CPSNS Orientations, NS Chief of Police Association.

## Monitoring & Reporting Activities

### Annual Program Activity:

Overall Program activities compared to the previous fiscal years outlined below:

Item	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Patient Profiles – Internally Generated <sup>1</sup>	136	61	71	102
Patient Profiles – eAccess Generated	23,057	18,701	18,871	4,558
Requests for Prescriber Profiles	16	16	3	89
Requests for Pharmacy Profiles	0	0	0	0
Referrals to Medical Consultant	79	70	25	36
Referrals to Pharmacist Consultant <sup>2</sup>	94	147	86	72
Referrals to Practice Review Committee <sup>3</sup>	9	16	13	25
Referrals to Licensing Authorities	4	2	0	2
Drug Utilization Review Inquiries	75	134	188	176
Referrals to Law Enforcement	0	1	0	0
Requests for Patient Profiles by Law Enforcement	33	16	15	8
Notification of Charges	3	3	1	2

Notes:

1. Generation of Patient Profiles decreased with discontinuation of some reports.
2. The NSPMP Pharmacist Consultant role was introduced on Oct 17, 2018.
3. Referrals to PRC are counted as new unique case referrals and excludes counts of previously reported ongoing open cases.

### Practice Review Committee (PRC)

The committee convened for four meetings. The committee welcomed a new member and the NSPMP conducted a meet and greet and orientation. The committee has reviewed 25 Prescriber Practice Reviews.

### Media Inquiries:

During 2022/2023 the NSPMP received 1 media request, however, the nature of the inquiry was not relevant to the NSPMP or monitored drugs.

### Data Reporting & Releases:

During 2022/2023 the NSPMP processed the following information requests:

Requested By	Information Request
Individual GP	Individual GP – January 2023 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prescribing report for an individual GP from Jan 1, 2022 to Dec 31, 2022 regarding a previous interim suspension.</li> </ul>
DHW	DHW (SURVEILLANCEDHW@novascotia.ca) – January 2023 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opioid Prescriptions Dispensed by Filled Date Quarter - All Opioids, All Opioids excl. Methadone/Buprenorphine, and Methadone/Buprenorphine Only - 2022-Q1 to 2022-Q4</li> <li>Opioid Prescriptions Dispensed by Filled Date Quarter - Methadone and Buprenorphine separately - 2022-Q1 to 2022-Q4</li> </ul>
Dr. Jennifer Foster	Academic Research – October 2022 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Linked IWK/PMP dataset, for research study 'Chronic Opioid Use in PICU Survivors' (PMP19.02). Including data cleansing, data linkage, assignment of random PMP Study IDs, details of PMP opioid Rxs dispensed from 2015-2019, # of days of active Medicare coverage between 2015-2019, and explanation of various measures. Data file received from Jennifer Foster, and final linked dataset sent to Molly Ryan (IWK).</li> </ul>
Alicia Grant-Singh - Masters student, Dal, Nurse Practitioner)	Academic Research – November 2022 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of Nurse Practitioners associated with OAT drug dispenses over the last five years, separated by Methadone Prescribers only, Buprenorphine Prescribers only, and Total Unique Methadone/Buprenorphine Prescribers.</li> </ul>
Chiranjeev Sanyal Medicine\Community Health & Epidemiology	Academic Research – April 2023 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opioids prescribed by community pharmacies during Covid-19</li> </ul>

### Community Involvement & Education

The following is a summary of community and provincial initiatives in which the NSPMP staff members were involved:

#### **Drug Evaluation Alliance of Nova Scotia (DEANS):**

The Manager and Pharmacist Consultant of the NSPMP are members of the DEANS Management Committee. The focus of which is to contribute to the health of Nova Scotians by encouraging appropriate drug use. More information is available on the website.

<http://novascotia.ca/dhw/pharmacare/drug-evaluation-alliance-of-nova-scotia.asp>

#### **General Program Overview Presentations:**

Date	Group Name
Apr 2023	CPSNS Welcome Collaborative Orientation
Oct 2022	CPSNS Welcome Collaborative Orientation
Sept 2022	NS Practice Ready Assessment Group
Aug 2022	NS Chief of Police Association

#### **NS Chief of Police Association Drug Committee**

The Manager has been formally invited to join this committee with the first meeting occurring in the Spring of 2022. This committee continued to meet in 2023. The mandate of this Committee is as follows:

- “To promote safer and healthier communities through proactive leadership by addressing and influencing prevention, enforcement and treatment of substance abuse”.

## Program Financial Summary

The NSPMP fiscal year results are noted in the table below:

### 2022/2023 Reconciliation

#### NSPMP Financial Overview

Cost Area	Projections 2022/23 (\$)	Actual 2022/23 (\$)	Variance (\$)
Fixed Fees	\$ 1,358,125	\$ 1,358,125	\$ -
Flow Through	\$ 118,006	\$ 113,050	\$ 4,956
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 1,476,131</b>	<b>\$ 1,471,175</b>	<b>\$ 4,956</b>

Flow-Through cost actuals were lower in 2022/2023 due to the Medical Consultant vacancy for a portion of the year.