

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Canadian Epilepsy Alliance Calls for Changes to Address Drug Shortages**

June 19 2014. The Canadian Epilepsy Alliance/l'Alliance canadienne de l'épilepsie (CEA/ACE) is calling for changes to Canada's system for addressing shortages of prescription drugs. The call comes as Health Canada conducts a public consultation into the state of Canada's drug shortage notification system, a system the CEA says is not doing enough to prevent and address drug shortages.

"We need real action on drug shortages in Canada," says Suzanne Nurse, Chair of the CEA Drug Shortages Committee. "Too often people living with epilepsy only find out about a drug shortage at the pharmacy when they try to refill their medication. That is unacceptable and puts the health and safety of people living with epilepsy at risk."

People with epilepsy can face serious consequences including injuries, accidents and even death if there is a sudden disruption in the supply of their anti-seizure medication. The impact on someone's life can be tremendous when they leave their pharmacy empty-handed, there is huge stress, worry about potential loss of a driver's licence or loss of a job due to breakthrough seizures, and parents worry about their child's safety.

Diana, a mother in London Ontario, was glad to learn about Health Canada's public consultation. "I did the survey right away" says Diana who has had a personal experience with drug shortages. "It was scary" said Diana, referring to a shortage of an epilepsy medication called clobazam this spring. "I called one drug store after another worrying that I would not be able to get my daughter enough medication to last through the shortage. No one should have that extra stress in their lives."

Health Canada's Consultation on the Notification of Drug Shortages centers on the effectiveness of a single website, [drugshortages.ca](http://drugshortages.ca), where pharmaceutical companies can post information about drugs in short supply. Posting is voluntary and information about the frequent shortages in recent years has often come late or not at all, meaning patients, physicians and pharmacists are often left scrambling.

The Canadian Epilepsy Alliance believes that Health Canada must move to a mandatory notification system, as the United States has done, with pharmaceutical companies providing information about shortages as soon as it is available. That notification is only one part of what needs to happen to address shortages, says the CEA's Suzanne Nurse.

"Early notification gives people more time to respond to shortages," says Nurse, "but notification on its own does not prevent shortages and it doesn't address what happens when there is a shortage. We need Health Canada to be more involved, working with manufacturers, pharmacists, physicians and patients, to prevent shortages before they happen and to take real action when they do."

Health Canada's public consultation on drug shortages runs until July 5<sup>th</sup>. The 9 question online survey takes about 10-20 minutes to complete and gives anyone concerned about drug shortages an opportunity to make sure their voice is heard.

Public Consultation: [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dhp-mps/consultation/drug-medic/consult\\_shortages-penuries-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dhp-mps/consultation/drug-medic/consult_shortages-penuries-eng.php)

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**About the Canadian Epilepsy Alliance**

The Canadian Epilepsy Alliance (CEA) is a Canada-wide network of grassroots organizations dedicated to the promotion of independence and quality of life for people with epilepsy and their families, through support services, information, advocacy, and public awareness. For more information, please call 1-866-EPILEPSY (1-866-374-5377).