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More Medicines, Better Health Care

Innovative medicines help Canadians live longer and healthier lives. They also ease the burden on our healthcare system by avoiding more costly hospitalizations and invasive surgical procedures.

“When appropriately prescribed and adhered to by patients, innovative medicines are a key enabler of long-term health system sustainability,” says Russell Williams, President of Canada’s Research-Based Pharmaceutical Companies (Rx&D). “Innovative medicines and vaccines are often the most effective means of treating and preventing illness – and sometimes the only available treatment for some conditions. They minimize the cost of achieving a desired health outcome, maximize the health benefits that can be achieved within a given cost-constraint, and often produce health and societal benefits that exceed the costs of treatment,” he says.

All it takes is one molecule to create a new medicine. It might sound simple, but what goes into making new medicines is highly complex – and new treatments are worth it. From the molecule to your medicine cabinet, it can take 10 to 15 years to develop a new medicine and cost about 2.6 billion dollars in research and development.

There is no guarantee of success; the vast majority of potential medicines never reach the market, with most discarded during initial

screening. Researchers are constantly going back to the drawing board to evaluate if new molecules have the potential to improve the way we treat illnesses.

It’s true that the entire process takes a lot of time and can be very costly – and in some cases, the time it takes can be prohibitive and unnecessarily long. We need to act to come up with solutions that will create an environment that fosters and supports new developments in medicine, while at the same time guaranteeing the quality, safety and efficacy of new treatments so that Canadians can receive the best treatments, as early as possible.

Scientific advances are providing exciting new opportunities to develop new treatments that will save lives. Thanks to human genome sequencing, scientists are now able to identify genetic causes or predispositions to diseases, and healthcare practitioners are able to choose medicines that target illnesses or diseases based on these factors.

For patients, it means treatment that is responsive to their illness, offers fewer side effects and works with a patient’s own genetic makeup to treat disease. There is no debate: innovative medicines continue to revolutionise healthcare and offer enormous benefits to patients.