



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**BETTER PHARMACARE COALITION RESPONDS TO
BC GOVERNMENT PHARMACEUTICAL TASK FORCE**

Vancouver, B.C., May 21, 2008 --- The Better Pharmacare Coalition today responded to the B.C. Government's release of its Pharmaceutical Task Force report.

"On behalf of the Better Pharmacare Coalition, I commend the Premier of British Columbia and the Minister of Health for establishing the Task Force and accepting its drug plan recommendations on how best to maximize value for patients and improve the pharmaceutical approval and purchasing processes in B.C.," said Dr. Ron Woznow, Executive Director, The Arthritis Society, BC & Yukon Division. "The health organizations and consumer groups in the Better Pharmacare Coalition look forward to working immediately with Government and other stakeholders to create a drug plan that is based on transparent, evidence-based review processes that avoid duplication and include an increased role for patient participation."

Better PharmaCare Coalition supports the improvement of the B.C. PharmaCare program as reflected in the Task Force guiding principles, the first of which states "the best interests of the patient are paramount." Better PharmaCare strongly endorses the main themes of the report's recommendations to improve:

- 1) transparency through evidence-based drug reviews and listing processes;
- 2) timely coverage of quality prescription medications and health products;
- 3) access to prescription medications best suited to a patient's medical condition; and
- 4) negotiating processes to ensure maximum value for patients and the health care system.

"Patient groups are a key player in the Task Force's recommended integrated approach to find ways to ensure British Columbians have timely access to the latest advances in health research including medicines and vaccines."

Better PharmaCare Coalition has historically worked with Government to find ways to ensure patients receive the right medication at the right time. As part of its ongoing advocacy on behalf of the health of all British Columbians, BPC presented a submission to the Pharmaceutical Task Force. In its presentation to the Task Force, Better PharmaCare Coalition raised concerns regarding British Columbia's existing approach to the listing of pharmaceuticals and other health-related products.

“Efficient and effective procurement and service delivery options can help counter sustainability pressures facing health care,” said Woznow. “However, we have serious concerns about the issue of tendering and patient choice. Limiting choice to innovative medicines flies in the face of patient individuality. We intend to work closely with Government to ensure there is realistic choice within tendering categories and that there is an avenue for accommodating ‘exceptional cases,’ as designated by a clinical expert, when the existing choices of medicines simply do not meet the needs of a patient.”

The Better Pharmacare Coalition is a joining together of provincial and national health organizations and consumer groups with a mandate to speak on behalf of British Columbia citizens on issues related to the Government of British Columbia's PharmaCare (BC PharmaCare) program. The coalition was formed in 1997 in response to BC PharmaCare policy development not reflective of the medical literature, best clinical practice and the needs of patients in BC. The Coalition works on behalf of its members to ensure appropriate and timely BC PharmaCare program coverage for evidence-based medications.

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For further information or to arrange an interview with a representative from the Better PharmaCare Coalition or an individual patient, please contact:

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