



# Nova Scotia Prescription Monitoring Program

Annual Report 2024-2025

**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. There was further expansion in 2022 when Tramadol was added to the Controlled Drug and Substances Act Schedule I as a monitored drug. In 2023 Tramadol was added to the monitoring drug list with the NSPMP and became subject to the same monitoring activities as all other monitored drugs.

The focus for 2024/2025 was on the second-year execution of the new Strategic Plan. The details of the Strategic Planning Year 2 progress 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 – Retired 2025**

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 – Term End Jan 2025**

Public Member

**Ms. Sharon Johnson-Legere**

Public Member

**Dr. Monica Behl – Term End Oct 2024**

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.

### Our Strategic Goals 2023-2026

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

1. Provide strategic support for prescribing monitored drugs to patients for acute, chronic, and long-term care needs.
2. Increase public and professional awareness of how the NSPMP's mandate supports patient care, harm reduction and public safety.
3. Position the Board as a primary resource for government on its policies related to monitored drugs.
4. 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, 2024-Mar 31, 2025:

Area	Year 2 Outcomes (2024-2025)	Status			Comments/Strategic Goals
		Complete	In Progress	Pending	
Strategic Plan	Post approved Strategic Plan on public facing NSPMP website.	X			Three-year timeline was compiled, and strategic goals and projects were plotted by year and month.
	Develop tactical/operational items to achieve the Strategic Goals. Provide ongoing progress updates to Board	X			
Governance	Support and collaborate with DHW to assess current Regulations and Policies, identifying areas to revise.	X			Position the Advisory Board as a primary resource for government on its policies related to monitored drugs.
	Assess and review any required communication or changes that may result from law amendments to the NSPMP Act and its Regulations.		X		Updates to Regulations still pending approval.
	Provide orientation and support to new appointed public Board members.	X			

Area	Year 2 Outcomes (2024-2025)	Status			Comments/Strategic Goals
		Complete	In Progress	Pending	
Financial	On an ongoing basis, the Board will be provided overview of program financials for transparency and visibility.	X			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.
	Implement proactive changes to internal DUR processes that have a positive impact to prescribers via lessening the administrative burden to reply to NSPMP requests.	X			Optimize the efficiency and effectiveness of the program. Automated criteria improvements have reduced system logging and provide for a fast run time of system-generate risk flags.
	Continual review of processes to improve quality, efficiency and volume of reviews, including reduction of manual data fixes.	X			Coordination with DIS. Review of DIS benefits being conducted; NSPMP participated in interviews, surveys and provided years of historical data regarding fixing errors.



Area	Year 2 Outcomes (2024-2025)	Status			Comments/Strategic Goals
		Complete	In Progress	Pending	
<b>Data Integrity/ Infrastructure &amp; Data Analysis</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.  Ensure data is complete and accurate to:
	Implement mass data fix solution(s) to reduce manual entry.	<b>X</b>			Provide strategic support for prescribing monitored drugs to patients for acute, chronic, and long-term care needs.
	Continual monitoring of new Tramadol criteria for DUR as well as trend experience.	<b>X</b>			Optimize the efficiency and effectiveness of the Program.
	Stimulant trend identification and analysis of historical data to highlight amongst stakeholder groups.	<b>X</b>			Stimulant data was analyzed for the previous 5 years, showing a marked increase. Delivered presentations amongst stakeholder groups for awareness and study purposes.

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Area	Year 2 Outcomes (2024-2025)	Status			Comments/Strategic Goals
		Complete	In Progress	Pending	
Information Sharing/ Stakeholder Relations	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 continues to be active member of newly formed Chief of Police Association Drug Committee and contribute to effective discussions and presentations.
	Expanded the NSPMP's reach 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.
	Stimulant data highlighted to relevant stakeholders to be aware of trends for potential investigation and/or research.	<b>X</b>			NSPMP proactively identifies and highlights trends in monitored drug dispense data.

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Area	Year 2 Outcomes (2024-2025)	Status			Comments/Strategic Goals
		Complete	In Progress	Pending	
Brand/ Reputation	Maintain and enhance, where possible, the NSPMP relationship with law enforcement. Developed 'Working with NSPMP' poster for Law Enforcement in an effort to promote NSPMP as a resource to law enforcement.	X			NSPMP continue to be active member of newly formed Chief of Police Association Drug Committee and contribute to effective discussions and presentations.
	Enhance public-facing NSPMP website to include education section.		X		Increase public and professional awareness of how the NSPMP's mandate supports patient care, harm reduction and public safety.
	Continue to participate in stakeholder presentations and invitations for consultation/collaboration on research studies and publications. Expand where possible.	X			Work with best in industry experts on survey and focus group development and execution.
	Explore additional methods and avenues to measure public and professional awareness of the NSPMP's mandate.	X			
	Develop and execute a public survey and a public focus group. Develop and execute a survey for prescribers.	X			

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### Monitoring & Reporting Activities

#### Annual Program Activity:

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

Item	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Patient Profiles – Internally Generated <sup>1</sup>	61	71	13	9	10
Patient Profiles – eAccess Generated	18,701	18,871	17,979	17,355	16,313
Requests for Prescriber Profiles	16	3	89	96	78
Requests for Pharmacy Profiles	0	0	0	0	0
Referrals to Medical Consultant	70	25	36	37	32
Referrals to Pharmacist Consultant	147	86	72	24	35
Referrals to Practice Review Committee <sup>2</sup>	16	13	25	20	16
Referrals to Licensing Authorities	2	0	2	1	4
Drug Utilization Review Inquiries	134	188	176	135	143
Referrals to Law Enforcement	1	0	0	0	1
Requests for Patient Profiles by Law Enforcement	16	15	8	9	4
Notification of Charges	3	1	2	0	0

Notes:

1. Generation of Patient Profiles decreased with discontinuation of some reports.
2. Referrals to PRC are counted as new unique case referrals and excludes counts of previously reported ongoing open cases.

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### Media Inquiries:

During 2024/2025 the NSPMP received 0 media requests.

### Data Reporting & Releases:

During 2024/2025 the NSPMP processed the following information requests:

Requested By	Information Request
NS Department of Health and Wellness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Opioid Prescriptions Dispensed by Filled Date Quarter - All Opioids, All Opioids excl. Methadone/Buprenorphine, and Methadone/Buprenorphine</li><li>Dispenses of Oxycodone between Dec 31, 1995, and Sept. 12, 2024</li><li>Foquest Dispenses from 2019 to 2024-YTD (up to Dec. 10). Including breakdowns by age, gender, age and gender, and DIN. Incl. cardholder type = NS, and age calculated as of Dec. 31 of each year.</li><li>Number of prescribers registered with the NSPMP, broken down by NS and Out-of-Province prescribers.</li></ul>
Dr. Chiranjeev Sanyal Dalhousie University	Academic Research Study for "The impact of Controlled Drugs and Substances Act exemption for prescribing opioids during the COVID-19 pandemic in Nova Scotia, Canada."  Academic Research Study for Dalhousie University, College of Pharmacy: "Prevalence of opioid analgesic dispensations prescribed by pharmacists to adults in Nova Scotia during the COVID-19 pandemic: A retrospective study."
Dr. Jennifer Foster IWK/Dalhousie	Academic Research Study for "Chronic opioid use in adult survivors of pediatric intensive care unit admissions."
CEO & Registrar Nova Scotia College of Pharmacists	Provided data for presentation and meetings with Health Canada: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Total Number of RXs and Dispenses for Monitored Drugs Prescribed by Pharmacists, and Number of Pharmacists, 2020 to 2024-YTD, including overall unique numbers</li><li>Chart showing % of dispenses of prescriptions written by a Pharmacist, by Drug Category (Benzo, Opioid, Stimulant, Other), for 2024-YTD</li><li>Number of Patients who Received Dispenses for Monitored Drugs Prescribed by Pharmacists, 2020 to 2024-YTD</li><li>Pharmacist-Prescribed Dispenses of Methadone/Suboxone products most commonly used for dependence, 2024-YTD</li><li>For 2024-YTD, list of drugs pharmacists have prescribed in the 'other' category</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.

[DEANS](#)

#### **Stakeholder Engagement & Education:**

The NSPMP's Strategic Plan had a focus on education, namely, exploring various information channels to increase awareness and understanding of the Nova Scotia's Prescription Monitoring Program's role in supporting patient care, harm reduction and public safety. 2024/2025 saw a marked increase in the amount of outreach, education and engagement with a variety of stakeholders.

2024/2025 saw an astonishing 280% increase in the amount of external outreach, presentations and education sessions relative to 2023 year-end. A detailed list of presentations is found below.

In conjunction with this, the NSPMP undertook a wide-spread survey and focus group approach to engage with the public and the prescribing community. Working with industry-leader, Narrative Research, the NSPMP undertook work to deploy a public survey, a prescriber survey and a public focus group. The intent behind these activities were two-fold: to understand the public and professional opinion of the NSPMP and to identify any areas of opportunity. Detailed results of each activity were shared with the Board. The focus for 2025/2026 will be to continue to leverage these activities and results.

### General Program Overview Presentations & Education:

Date	Group Name
June 2024	CPSNS Welcome Collaborative Orientation
June 2024	CPSNS Welcome Collaborative – Chronic Pain & Legacy Patients
Sept 2024	NSPMP Board – Stimulant Trends
Sept 2024	NSPMP's Practice Review Committee – Stimulant Trends
Sept 2024	NS Practice Ready Assessment Group
Sept 2024	CPSNS Welcome Collaborative Orientation
Sept 2024	CPSNS Welcome Collaborative – Chronic Pain & Legacy Patients
Sept 2024	DEANS – Stimulant Trends
Oct 2024	DEANS - NSPMP Monitored Drug Data
Oct 2024	NSH Pharmacist Prescribing Champions - NSPMP Interventions, Monitored Drug Data, Pharmacist Prescribing Data
Dec 2024	DHW Pharmacare Team - Monitored Drug Data & Stimulant Trends
Dec 2024	CPSNS Welcome Collaborative - NSPMP Q&A Review of Programs and Monitored Drug Data
Dec 2024	CPSNS Welcome Collaborative – Chronic Pain & Legacy Patients
Jan 2025	CPSNS Assessment Clinic Orientation - NSPMP Program Info
Jan 2025	CPSNS Assessment Clinic Orientation - Legacy Patient Management
Jan 2025	Dalhousie College of Pharmacy, 3rd year students. NSPMP Program Info
Mar 2025	NSPRAP Program - NSPMP overview and discussion
Mar 2025	CPSNS Welcome Collaborative - NSPMP Q& A Review of Programs and Monitored Drug Data
Mar 2025	CPSNS Welcome Collaborative – Chronic Pain & Legacy Patients

### NS Chief of Police Association Drug Committee

The NSPMP continues to be an active member to this committee. 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:

#### 2024/2025 Reconciliation

Cost Area	Projections 2024-25 (\$)	Actuals 2024-25 (\$)	Variance (\$)
Fixed Fees	\$1,444,782	\$1,444,782	\$0
Flow Through	\$89,200	\$103,123	(\$13,923)
Total	\$1,533,982	\$1,547,906	(\$13,923)