

Federal Patients info-sheet – March 2018

While most people's health care is delivered through provincial and territorial programs, the federal government is directly responsible for the health care of several groups of people.

When we advocate for better access to sexual and reproductive health services (including abortion services) for all people, it is important to make sure the federal government provides high quality and equal access to those services to those who access health care through the Non-Insured Health Benefit Program (for First Nations and Inuit people), the Interim Federal Health Program (for refugees arriving in Canada), Programs from Correctional Services of Canada (for federal inmates), National Defense Health Services (for Canadian military personnel), Public Safety and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (for RCMP members) and the Veterans Affairs (for veterans).

Here's which federal patients have coverage to date:

Non-Insured Health Benefit Program (NIHB)

In May 2017, it was announced that the NIHB program was going to cover the costs for Mifegymiso for eligible First Nations and Inuit individuals. In every province and territory, regardless of whether universal cost coverage plans have been implemented by the government, those with coverage under NIHB are eligible to receive Mifegymiso free of cost. The only exception is British Columbia, where those who were previously covered by NIHB are now covered by BC PharmaCare and so, get the medication free of cost under that program instead.

Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP)

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada has added Mifegymiso to their Prescription drug coverage.). IFHP provides limited, temporary health coverage for protected persons, including resettled refugees, refugee claimants, and certain other groups who are not eligible for provincial or territorial health insurance. This includes coverage for most prescription medications and other products listed on provincial or territorial public drug plan formularies and is provided through Medavie Blue Cross.

However, while they added Mifegymiso to their list, this coverage remains limited to only those provinces/territories that have added it to their formulary, as coverage via IFHP depends on provincial and territorial formularies.

This gap has come to our attention as, while it is most often the case that a province / territory will add a medication to a formulary as a necessary step to implementing full cost coverage, an issue is arising in provinces like Ontario which have implemented universal cost coverage for Mifegymiso but have not added it to the formulary (a prerequisite to access the medication through the prescription drug coverage of IFHP). In some instances, prescribers may be able to bill IFHP directly if they dispense the

medication as oppose to send the client to the pharmacy to pick up their prescription.

Canadian Forces Health Services

As of March 2018, the National Defense and Canadian Armed Forces have added Mifegymiso to their Drug Benefits list for people covered by Canadian Forces Health Services.

The Canadian Forces Health Services (CFHS) is the designated health care provider for Canada's military personnel, delivering medical and dental services at military installations across Canada and overseas. CFHS provides prescription and non-prescription drug benefits to its members as defined in the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Drug Benefit List.

Programs from Correctional Services of Canada (CSC)

Correctional Services of Canada will be listing Mifegymiso on the CSC National Formulary as of April 1, 2018 following a listing recommendation by the Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health (CADTH) and the CSC National Pharmacy and Therapeutics (NP&T) Committee.

Due to the time-sensitive nature of the medication, any request for Mifegymiso is to be addressed quickly and efficiently for people who are incarcerated in federal facilities. That said, while it is an important development in ensuring access to a complete package of sexual and reproductive health services, it is crucial that better access to Mifegymiso does not preclude people who are incarcerated from accessing surgical abortion care. Having access to Mifegymiso inside correctional facilities does not necessarily mean that people would want to terminate their pregnancy using Mifegymiso especially if they would have to experience the termination process inside the institution.

Veterans Affairs Canada

Veterans Affairs Canada has not yet announced cost coverage and access to Mifegymiso for people covered by their program if the province or territory where a member resides does not have a coverage program in place.

Veterans Affairs Canada provides supplemental coverage to veterans who require health services or medications as a result of injuries sustained in the line of duty. For all other coverage, veterans are covered by their provincial and territorial health insurance plans. As such, access to Mifegymiso for veterans depends on whether they reside in a province or territory that has implemented full cost coverage for this medication. That said, as federal patients, veterans deserve supplementary coverage on top of what is offered through provincial and territorial plans, and as such, should have access to free Mifegymiso regardless of whether they are eligible for Veterans Affairs Canada's benefits and pensions.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police has not yet announced cost coverage and access to Mifegymiso for people covered by their program if the province or territory where a member resides does not have a coverage program in place.

Since April 1, 2013, all serving RCMP members are considered to be “insured persons” under the Canada Health Act and receive their basic health care through the health care system in the province or territory they reside. The province or territory provides the same basic health services to serving RCMP members as it does to its other residents. The RCMP will cover the additional cost of providing basic health care in exceptional circumstances. These include when an on duty RCMP member incurs basic health care medical expenses outside his or her province/territory; when there are fee differences during a waiting period after transfer to another province; and other similar situations. Action Canada believes that lack of access to Mifegymiso in provinces and territories where the medication is not universally covered or on the formulary should qualify members for coverage through the RCMP Health care package.

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