

**A FOCUS ON**

# Appropriate medication use in Canada



Annual Report **2019**



**Canadian  
Deprescribing  
Network**

## Our goals



**Eliminate the use of risky medications for Canadian seniors.**

**Ensure access to safer drug and non-drug therapies.**

## Contact us!

We want to speak with you about how we can collaborate. Is there a project we can help you with?

### Directors:

Dr. Cara Tannenbaum and Dr. James Silvius  
Canadian Deprescribing Network  
Centre de recherche de l'Institut universitaire de gériatrie de Montréal  
4565 Queen-Mary Road (M4826), Montreal (Quebec) H3W 1W5

**Email:** [info@deprescribingnetwork.ca](mailto:info@deprescribingnetwork.ca)

**Website:** [deprescribingnetwork.ca](http://deprescribingnetwork.ca)

**Facebook:** [@deprescribingnetwork](https://www.facebook.com/deprescribingnetwork)

**Twitter:** [@DeprescribeNet](https://twitter.com/DeprescribeNet)

This report is available on the Canadian Deprescribing Network website in English and French. Printed copies are available upon request.

# The Canadian Deprescribing Network

The Canadian Deprescribing Network (CaDeN) is a group of healthcare leaders, clinicians, decision-makers, academic researchers and patient advocates working together to mobilize knowledge and promote the deprescribing of medications that may no longer be of benefit or that may be causing harm.

## What is deprescribing?

Deprescribing is the planned and supervised process of reducing or stopping risky or unnecessary medications. The goal is to reduce medication burden and harm, while maintaining or improving quality of life.

## Our structure



The **Codirectors of the Network**, Dr Jim Silvius (left) and Dr Cara Tannenbaum (right), ensure meaningful leadership of the initiative and oversee Network activities.



The **Executive Committee** is composed of the Network Co-directors, committee Chairs as well as senior healthcare leaders. Their role is to plan and facilitate the implementation and evaluation of the initiative.



The **Public Awareness Committee** is made up of passionate patient advocates from around the country.

The committee's mandate is to raise public awareness, engagement, and action for shared decision-making around unnecessary or inappropriate medicines.



The **Healthcare Provider Committee** is comprised of clinicians who are devoted to medication safety and deprescribing as part of their practice and research activities.

The committee's mandate is to increase healthcare provider awareness, motivation and capacity around safe use of medicines.



The **Nursing Subcommittee** develops a strategy for engaging nurses to support efforts to ensure appropriate use of medications in older adults, with an emphasis on deprescribing.

# Why is there a problem with medication use in Canada?

As we age, we generally have to manage a growing number of chronic health conditions, such as high blood pressure, diabetes or osteoporosis. Medications represent an essential component of the management of chronic disease. It is not unusual to have to take multiple medications to control these conditions and alleviate symptoms. At the same time, our body becomes more sensitive to medication effects due to the impacts of aging on different organs (e.g. kidneys, liver, brain).

For these reasons, older adults are more likely to experience medication harms.

## Potential medication harms for seniors include:



### Hospitalizations

Seniors are hospitalized five times more often than people under age 65 due to harmful effects of their medications (CIHI 2013).



### Falls & fractures



### Memory problems



### Loss of independence



## \$1.4 billion

in taxpayer dollars is spent every year treating health problems in older adults caused by risky medications (Morgan et al. 2016).

## What is inappropriate (also known as risky) medication use?

Using more medications than needed or taking medications that may do more harm than good.

## Risky medications are common

Nearly 2 million Canadian seniors regularly take at least one risky medication (CIHI 2018).

## Taking too many medications (i.e. polypharmacy) is common

The risk of harmful effects, drug interactions and hospitalizations increases when you take more medications.



**2 out of 3 Canadians** (66%)  
over the age of 65 take at least 5  
different prescription medications.



**1 out of 4 Canadians** (27%)  
over the age of 65 take at least 10  
different prescription medications.

(CIHI 2018)

# Deprescribing is a solution to inappropriate medication use



**Medications affect us differently as we age:** What helped improve health at one stage in life may not be of benefit at another stage, and may even cause harm because of side effects and drug interactions.



A medication ceases to be appropriate when the dose is too high, the medication is taken for too long, or when safer alternatives exist. In these contexts, **deprescribing** should be considered.

The following medications are deemed risky for seniors:



- Long-term use of proton-pump inhibitors for acid reflux
- Use of opioids for chronic non-cancer pain
- Sleeping pills

**Deprescribing is a part of appropriate medication use. Appropriate use means that patients receive the right dose of the right medications in the best way, at the right time, and for the correct length of time.**



# What we do

The Canadian Deprescribing Network leads a variety of activities to reach its goal of eliminating risky medication use. These activities fall under five broad categories:



## SPARK

Generating interest, ideas and enthusiasm through information sharing, meetings and conversations with the public, healthcare providers and other key stakeholders.

**Learn more on page 10:**  
*Regional meetings*



## CONNECT

Creating links between people who lead existing and/or budding practices and policy initiatives.

**Learn more on pages 8-9:**  
*Champions spread the word and lead key initiatives*



## Canadian Deprescribing Network



## INFLUENCE

Inspiring and steering the thinking and direction of activities to encompass our goals.

**Learn more on page 14:**  
*Deprescribing partnerships around the world*



## FACILITATE

Sharing intellectual capital and tools to take initiatives further.

**Learn more on page 13:**  
*Pharmacare and appropriate medication use*



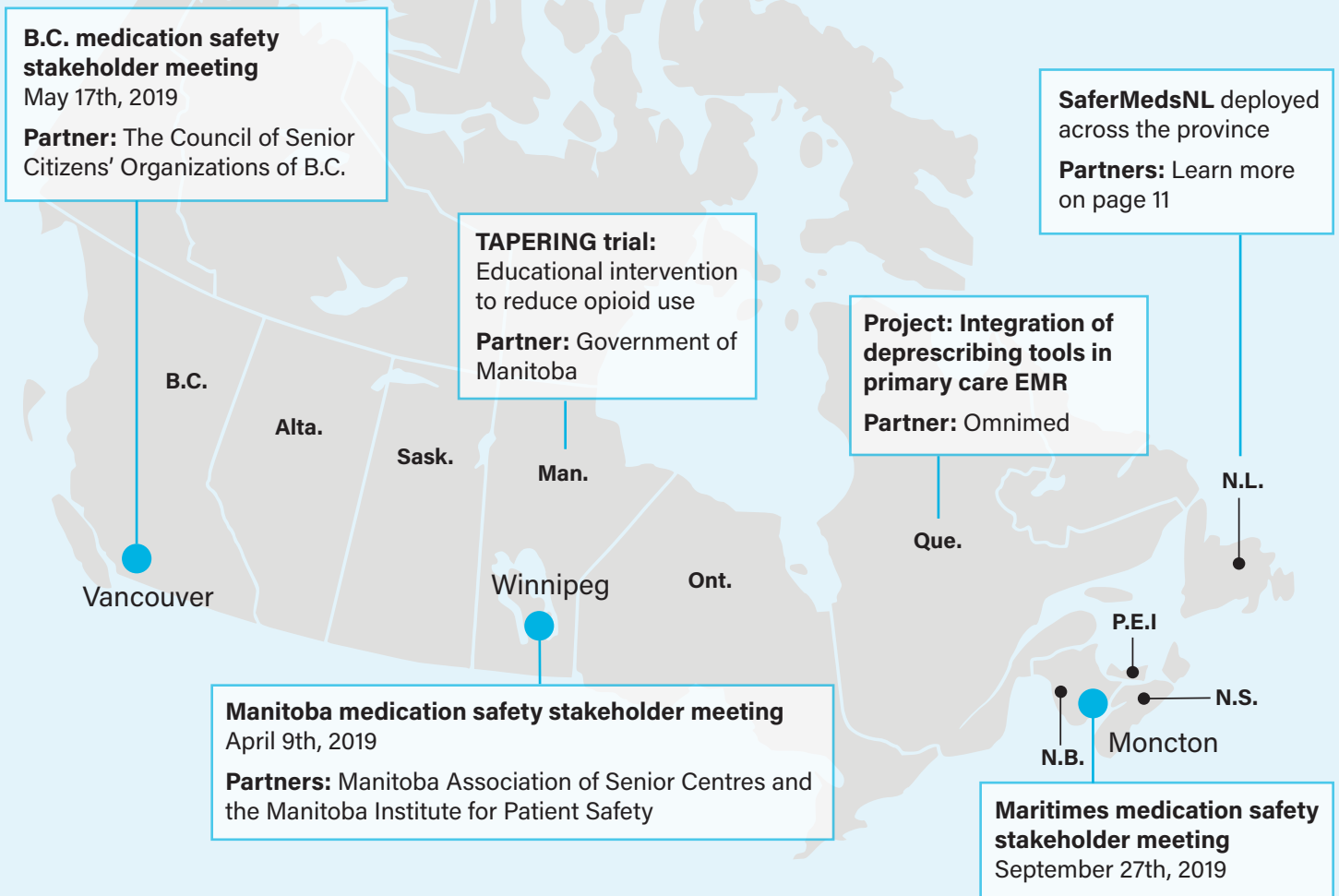
## ACCELERATE

Moving the initiatives of others along faster.

**Learn more on page 11:**  
*Making meds safer on all levels in Newfoundland and Labrador*

# 2019 highlights

2019 was action packed! Here are some highlights from our initiatives across the country.



## 2019 outreach efforts

### Engaging communities



**1 presentation/week**

to seniors organizations. Presentations held in all 10 provinces.

### Providing tools



**30,000+**

printed brochures disseminated

### Raising healthcare provider awareness



**1 presentation/week**

to healthcare provider organizations, including doctors, pharmacists and nurses.

### Spreading the word

**23 publications**

in newsletters & magazines

**19 articles and 8 interviews**

in major news outlets

# CONNECT: Champions spreading the word and leading key initiatives

We are deeply grateful to all who have donated their time and energy to our cause. Here are just a few snapshots of community and healthcare champions spreading the word and leading key initiatives across Canada.



**JANET CURRIE (LEFT) IS THE CHAIR AND JOHANNA TRIMBLE (RIGHT) IS A MEMBER OF THE CADEN PUBLIC AWARENESS COMMITTEE. BOTH LEAD MEDICATION SAFETY ADVOCACY EFFORTS ON PROVINCIAL AND NATIONAL LEVELS.**



**SHIRLEY PIERCE (RIGHT) AND ELAINE CAMPBELL (LEFT) ARE SHARING INFORMATION ABOUT DEPRESCRIBING IN P.E.I. AND BEYOND.**



**BILL BERRYMAN IS THE PRESIDENT OF THE RETIRED TEACHERS ORGANIZATION OF NOVA SCOTIA AND IS SPREADING THE WORD AMONG HIS MEMBERS. HE WAS PART OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE FOR THE MARITIMES MEDICATION SAFETY STAKEHOLDER MEETING.**



**MAUREEN KLENK IS A NURSE PRACTITIONER WORKING WITH THE SENIORS HOUSE CALLS PROGRAM IN REGINA. IN 2019, SHE GAVE SEVERAL PRESENTATIONS ON MEDICATION SAFETY TO COMMUNITY GROUPS.**

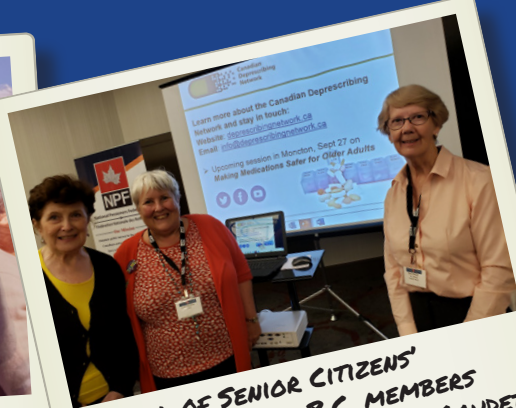


**DR. CHERYL SADOWSKI IS A PHARMACIST AND PROFESSOR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA, IN EDMONTON. SHE HAS BEEN WORKING TO INCLUDE DEPRESCRIBING IN EVERY MODULE OF THE PHARMACY CURRICULUM, SO THAT PHARMACISTS INTEGRATE THESE ACTIVITIES IN THEIR DAILY PRACTICE.**





**DR. LALITHA RAMAN-WILMS (LEFT) AND DR. BARB FARRELL (RIGHT) CHAIR THE HEALTHCARE PROVIDER COMMITTEE, FOCUSED ON DRIVING CHANGE IN PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION. THEY ARE ALSO CONDUCTING RESEARCH USING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TO INCREASE PUBLIC CAPACITY FOR DEPRESCRIBING CONVERSATIONS.**



**COUNCIL OF SENIOR CITIZENS' ORGANIZATIONS OF B.C. MEMBERS KATHLEEN JAMIESON, LESLIE GAUDETTE AND BARB MIKULEC (LEFT TO RIGHT) RAISED PUBLIC AWARENESS ON DEPRESCRIBING ACROSS THE COUNTRY.**



**DR. WINNIE SUN IS A MEMBER OF THE CADEN NURSING COMMITTEE. SHE AIMS TO INCREASE NURSES' AWARENESS AND CONFIDENCE WHEN MANAGING THEIR PATIENTS' MEDICATIONS.**



**CONNIE NEWMAN IS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE MANITOBA ASSOCIATION OF SENIOR CENTRES AND A MEMBER OF CADEN'S PUBLIC AWARENESS COMMITTEE. SHE WAS THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND THE PLANNING OF THE MANITOBA MEDICATION SAFETY STAKEHOLDER MEETING.**



Photo credit: Nick Pearce

**WITH THEIR WEBSITE MYSLEEPWELL.CA, CADEN EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS DR. DAVID GARDNER (LEFT) AND DR. ANDREA MURPHY (RIGHT), FROM DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY ARE TACKLING INSOMNIA WITHOUT USE OF MEDICATION. THEY ALSO HELPED ORGANIZE THE MARITIMES MEDICATION SAFETY STAKEHOLDER MEETING.**



**DR. SOLVEIG NILSON, FAMILY DOCTOR (LEFT), AND DR. BRENDA SCHUSTER, CLINICAL PHARMACIST (2ND FROM LEFT), ARE ENSURING PATIENTS AT THE ACADEMIC FAMILY MEDICINE UNIT IN REGINA BENEFIT FROM THEIR MEDICATIONS WHILE REDUCING THE RISK OF HARMS.**



**JERRY GOSLING, PRESIDENT OF THE B.C. OLD AGE PENSIONERS ORGANIZATION (LEFT), AND DOUG DANFORTH, PHARMACIST (RIGHT), ARE A PASSIONATE DEPRESCRIBING DUO WHO HAVE GIVEN MORE THAN 50 PRESENTATIONS TO COMMUNITY GROUPS ACROSS B.C.**

# SPARK: Regional meetings

In 2019, the Network began hosting regional stakeholder meetings in Moncton, Vancouver and Winnipeg on the topic of medication safety for seniors. Approximately 100 stakeholders attended each event, including community organizations, healthcare professionals and policy makers.

## The goals of the meetings are to:



### Network

Connect and exchange with community, healthcare and policy leaders.



### Brainstorm

Identify concrete actions for improving medication safety for older adults.



### Mobilize

Take part in a province-wide initiative to make medication use safer for older adults.



### Learn

Share evidence-based knowledge, trends and perspectives on deprescribing, polypharmacy and medication safety for older adults.



### Equip

Discover key programs, tools and resources to support medication safety and deprescribing in the jurisdiction.



*Maritimes Medication Safety Stakeholder Meeting*



*B.C. Medication Safety Stakeholder Meeting*



*Manitoba Medication Safety Stakeholder Meeting*

# ACCELERATE: Collective impact on proton pump inhibitors in Newfoundland and Labrador

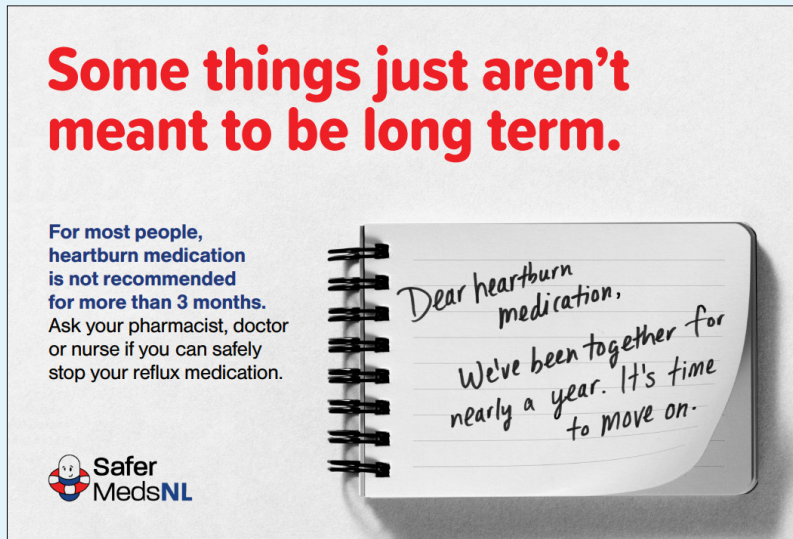
SaferMedsNL aims to make positive changes to medication use in Newfoundland and Labrador, by collaborating with community groups, healthcare provider associations and the government. In 2019, SaferMedsNL launched its heartburn medication campaign (also known as proton pump inhibitors (PPIs)).



As part of the campaign, we met with doctors, pharmacists and nurses from all over the province to share information on safe and appropriate use of PPIs. Thousands of patient educational brochures, postcards and posters were delivered. These materials promote conversations to ensure PPIs are continued when necessary and safely stopped when they are no longer needed.

As our public engagement campaign intensified over the summer, SaferMedsNL met people from across the province at shopping malls and public libraries, and gave presentations at various stakeholder meetings. We were overjoyed at the response to our media campaign. Thousands of people watched our video, read our write-up in the Telegram and tuned in to our TV and radio interviews.

We are grateful to all of our collaborators for their support in this important work (find out more here: [safermedsnl.ca/partners](http://safermedsnl.ca/partners)). Stay in touch and see what exciting events we have planned for 2020 by following us on [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#).



**Photos:** Postcard for the heartburn medication campaign (top left); Student Ambassadors from the School of Pharmacy spread the message of appropriate medication use at the Pharmacists' Association of Newfoundland and Labrador Annual Conference (top right); SaferMedsNL video featuring Linda Oldford, NL 50+ Federation's 1st Vice President (bottom).

# FACILITATE: Using research and education to make deprescribing accessible to patients and healthcare providers

In 2019, the Canadian Deprescribing Network led various quality improvement and research projects by collaborating with clinicians, researchers and policy-makers across the country. The goal: generate evidence, and increase knowledge and confidence among healthcare providers to bring deprescribing and medication safety to the forefront.

## Facilitating deprescribing in primary care

CaDeN has worked in partnership with Omnimed, an electronic medical records (EMR) software provider, to embed deprescribing tools in the EMR. The goal is to make these tools readily accessible to doctors, pharmacists and nurses working in primary care. With these tools, clinicians can identify candidates for deprescribing, print or email patient education brochures, [watch deprescribing educational videos](#), easily report and track deprescribing interventions, which encourages interdisciplinary practice.

**Next step:** Evaluate the interest, acceptability and use of these tools among clinicians.



Deprescribing whiteboard video

### This brochure is for people taking opioids for chronic non-cancer pain

Opioids or "narcotics" are derived from the opium poppy (or synthetic variations). Opioid medications include codeine, fentanyl, hydrocodone, hydromorphone, methadone, morphine, oxycodone and tramadol.

#### Short-term pain and chronic pain. What's the difference?

Short-term pain is your body's alarm system to warn you of injuries such as broken bones, surgery or illness. As your body heals, the pain goes away. Using opioids may be appropriate for this kind of pain.



Chronic pain is long-term pain that lasts for many months or even years. It persists when there is a short circuit in the wiring of the nervous system. The pain cannot be reversed with medication.

2 You May Be at Risk

## A focus on patient education to reduce opioid harms in Manitoba

In an effort to address the opioid crisis, the Government of Manitoba and CaDeN collaborated on a patient education campaign about the risks of opioid use and safer alternatives. 4,700 community-dwelling adults, who were using opioids for chronic non-cancer pain, were mailed an educational brochure. Preliminary results showed a reduction in average opioid dose among recipients of the brochure.

**Next step:** results are expected to be published in 2020.

## Are you a healthcare provider? Did your last continuing education (CE) conference feature deprescribing?

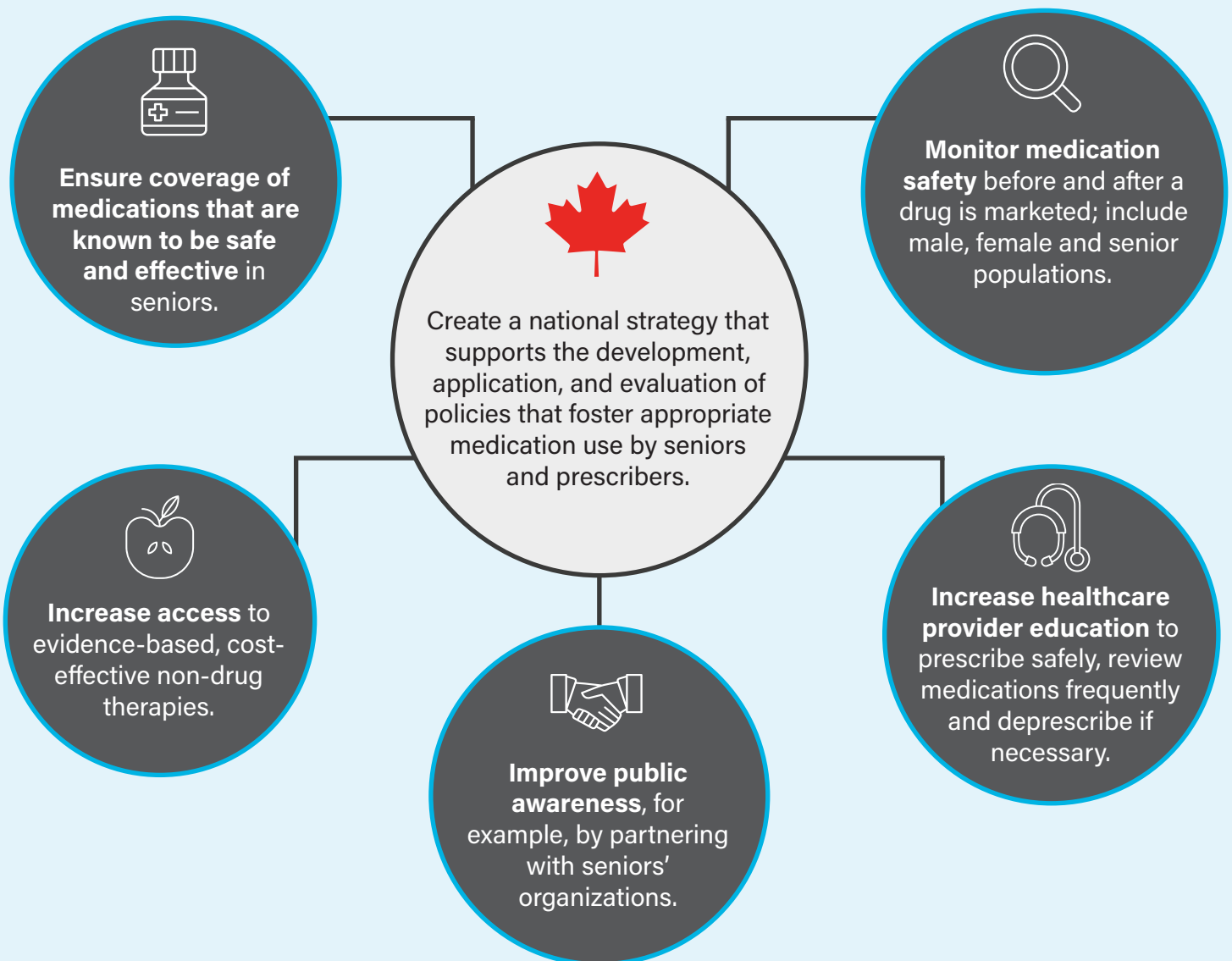
In 2019, CaDeN experts have spoken about deprescribing and medication safety at various continuing education events for doctors, pharmacists, nurses and other allied healthcare providers. By leading educational workshops, CaDeN aims to boost participant confidence and knowledge, so that they actively engage in deprescribing activities in their daily clinical practice. Want to make sure deprescribing is part of your next CE event? [Contact our team!](#)



# FACILITATE: Pharmacare and appropriate medication use

Canada is working on developing a National Pharmacare Plan to ensure equal access to prescription medications. However, equal access is only part of the equation. Appropriate medication use must be fully integrated into the National Pharmacare Plan to ensure medications are prescribed and used safely. This would also reduce healthcare costs derived from managing the problems (e.g., fractures, hospitalizations) related to inappropriate medication use.

## A national medication appropriateness plan would:



The Canadian Deprescribing Network, partners and community organizations are working to raise awareness among decision-makers to ensure appropriate medication use is addressed.

**But, we need your help!** Speak to your local government representatives about how the National Pharmacare Plan must ensure medications are prescribed and used safely by Canadians.

# INFLUENCE: Deprescribing partnerships around the world

CaDeN tools for the public and health providers have been translated and adapted by clinicians all around the world. Working with partners in Canada and internationally has allowed our work to reach even more people!

Check out these adaptations of our evidence-based patient brochure to raise awareness of the risks of sleeping pills in older adults:



Brazil

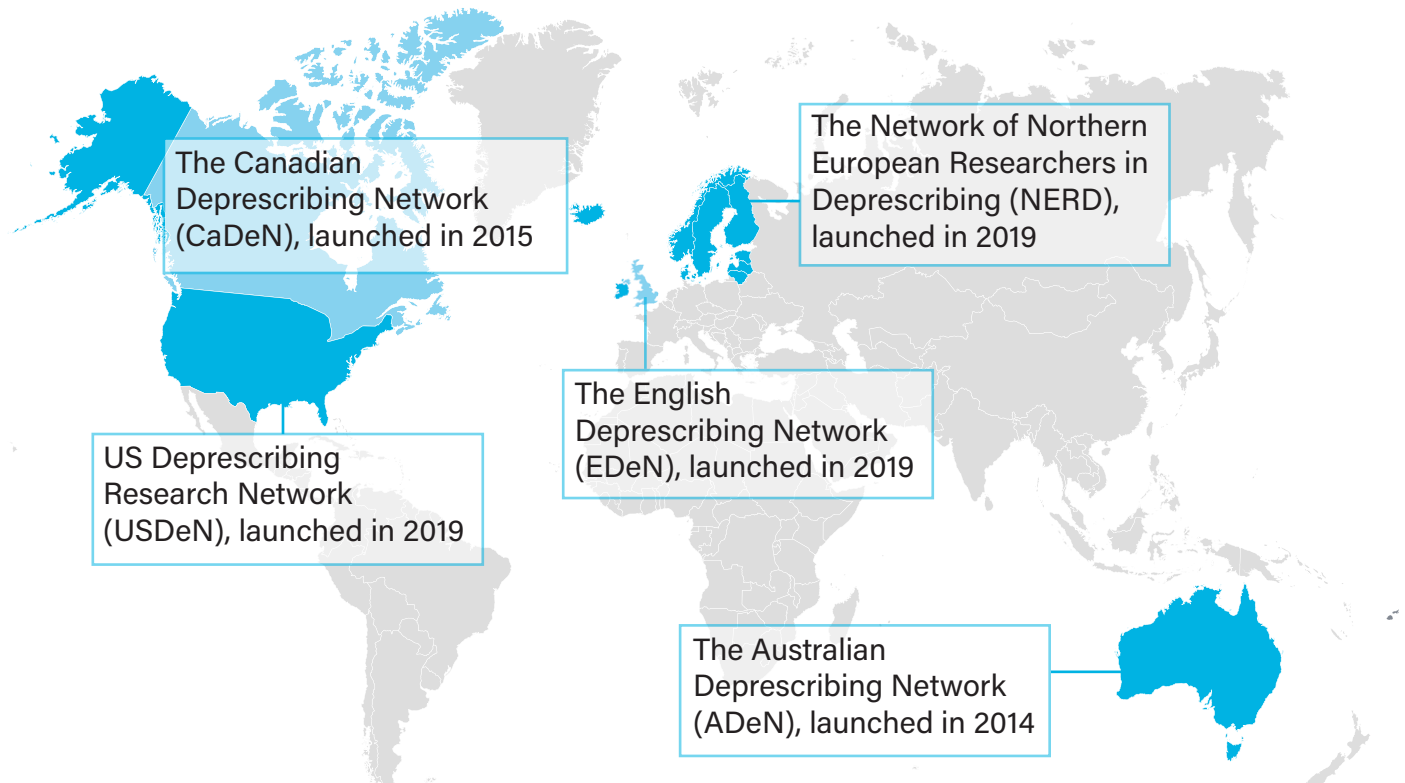
United States, Veterans Affairs

Turkey

Spain

Belgium

We are excited to be working with deprescribing networks around the world, many of which were launched this year:



The Canadian Deprescribing Network (CaDeN), launched in 2015

The Network of Northern European Researchers in Deprescribing (NERD), launched in 2019

The English Deprescribing Network (EDeN), launched in 2019

US Deprescribing Research Network (USDeN), launched in 2019

The Australian Deprescribing Network (ADeN), launched in 2014

# What's next in 2020?

CaDeN will continue to spark, connect, accelerate, facilitate and influence to make medication safety a reality in Canada. Here are a few examples of what we will be up to next year!



## SPARK

More regional meetings with community organizations, healthcare providers and policy makers.  
Starting with Saskatchewan in the spring of 2020!



## CONNECT

Connecting pharmacists, nurses and physicians with community organization leaders to help spread the word about medication safety.  
Focus on reaching seniors through community organizations.



## Canadian Deprescribing Network



## INFLUENCE

Advocating for the integration of appropriate medication use in the proposed National Pharmacare Plan.  
Publication of the TAPERING trial results on opioids in Manitoba.



## FACILITATE

Development of new tools for patients and healthcare providers.  
Measure reach and adoption of activities and campaigns.



## ACCELERATE

SaferMedsNL launches its 2nd year, targeting sedative-hypnotics.  
Assist in the launch of the United States Deprescribing Research Network (USDeN).

# Get involved!

Would you like to hold a deprescribing event in your area?

Would you like to develop a medication safety project in your workplace, community, region or province?

Contact us at [info@deprescribingnetwork.ca](mailto:info@deprescribingnetwork.ca)

## The Canadian Deprescribing Network is funded by:



## Special thanks to:

