

26 March 2018

The Honourable Adrian Dix  
Minister of Health, British Columbia  
Room 337 Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Dear Minister Dix:

**Re: choice of insulin pumps for the treatment of type 1 diabetes**

Type 1 diabetes is a progressive, life-threatening condition affecting up to 50,000 British Columbians. The disease is experienced differently by each individual. For some it is complex and can be complicated to manage. Survival for these people hinges on education, intensive lifestyle intervention, and support, coupled with insulin therapy. Insulin regimens for type 1 diabetes are highly individual and should be tailored to a person's treatment goals, lifestyle, diet, age, general health, motivation, hypoglycemia awareness status, and ability to self-manage.<sup>1</sup>

One medication delivery mechanism, the insulin pump, has been shown to be safe and effective when compared to other insulin regimens for people with type 1 diabetes. The current Canadian marketplace has only two options for insulin pumps, Medtronic and Omnipod, with a third, the Tandem t:slim X2, currently under review by Health Canada. Each pump has unique and different features. Some are waterproof, have larger insulin reservoirs, have smaller basal and bolus increments, and/or can be controlled remotely. Insulin pumps are not 'one-size-fits all' and individuals with diabetes must be able to match a pump to their requirements and lifestyle. The needs of a toddler using a pump are vastly different, for example, than those of a teen or a shift-worker.

Diabetes Canada believes that people with diabetes require choice in treating their condition. Indeed, it is their right. The ability to select between various insulin delivery systems in order to optimize treatment can be critical to successful management and the achievement of one's health potential.

It has come to our attention that the province may be considering a purchasing initiative which would reduce choice through a preferred vendor plan. This may be fiscally attractive in the short term, however, exclusive agreements meet neither the needs of British Columbians living with diabetes, nor the healthcare system, particularly if pump users abandon their pumps because they

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<sup>1</sup> DC "Canadian Diabetes Association 2013 Clinical Practice Guidelines for the Prevention and Management of Diabetes in Canada," *Canadian Journal of Diabetes*, 37(2013): S56

fail to match their needs, or if pump prices increase over time because of the absence of competitors.

We are also concerned that this, or any other possible change, is being considered without any meaningful consultation process with key patient and health care professional associations. We believe that health policy development must include the voice of those people who will be impacted and will ultimately benefit or be harmed by its implementation. Diabetes Canada requests that such a consultation happen prior to any decision or new direction being announced.

Diabetes Canada recommends that the Government of British Columbia ensures access to most appropriate insulin pump for people living with diabetes, and further that the existing provincial insulin pump program be expanded for all individuals with diabetes who are clinically eligible, regardless of age.

Thank you for your consideration. Kindly contact [joan.king@diabetes.ca](mailto:joan.king@diabetes.ca) or at 780 423-5722, extension 1211 at your convenience to discuss this important subject. Diabetes Canada looks forward to meeting with you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Sheila Kern  
Regional Director, BC and Yukon

cc: Mitch Moneo, ADM, BC Pharmaceutical Services Division

