7.2: Expanding the Scope of Practice for RNs to Include Prescribing Authority

A number of jurisdictions across Canada have implemented or are working towards expanding the scope of practice so that registered nurses (RNs) can prescribe certain medications (including vaccines) to better meet population health needs and improve timely access to appropriate health care (Canadian Nurses Association, 2015). This shift is part of a global trend towards nurse prescribing as countries look for ways to increase access to care in resource-constrained environments and improve efficiencies in complex health systems (Ladd & Schober, 2018). RN prescribing can also support cost effectiveness and innovative practice models (College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta, 2019). In Ontario, expanding the RN scope of practice to include certain prescribing powers aligns with the vision of a patient-oriented health care system (Hoskins, 2015).

Regulation of health professionals falls under provincial/territorial jurisdiction in Canada. This chapter focuses specifically on Ontario health professionals. If you are planning to practice in another jurisdiction, you should refer to the regulatory body in that province or territory for current information on scope of practice for vaccine prescribing and administration.