

Fact Sheet

March 2005

Office of Consumer and Public Involvement

The work of the Health Products and Food Branch (HPFB) directly effects the lives of every Canadian. As Canada's authority for the regulation of health products and food, the scope of the Branch's work is significant: there are over 22,000 human drug products 40,000 medical devices, and 400 biologics and genetic therapies on the Canadian market today. HPFB's mandate is to review this vast range of products for safety, quality and efficacy prior to marketing, and to monitor their use for health risks and therapeutic effectiveness once they are approved and being used in the marketplace.

Transparency and accountability are essential for Canadians to have confidence that HPFB bases all its decision-making on the public interest. Public awareness and involvement in the Branch's decisions about the risks and benefits of health products is key to earning that confidence. That's why HPFB established the Office of Consumer and Public Involvement (OCAPI) — to support Canadians in understanding how decisions about health products that affect their safety and health are made, and to help make sure that their perspective is considered in the decision-making process.

OCAPI acts as a centre of expertise on reaching out to and involving the public. Its staff work together with individuals who are directly involved in HPFB programs to develop initiatives that will reach out to inform and involve the public. This is done in various ways such as surveys, formal consultations and round-table discussions. Every year, OCAPI supports about 100 public involvement activities across the Branch on a broad variety of topics.

The Office is active in getting information out to Canadians on matters such as health products and food, the regulatory process, drugs and natural health products — information that will help the public in making decisions that affect their health. OCAPI's goal is to identify and fill gaps in information needs of Canadians, including patients and consumers about the business of the Branch. Its outreach program builds relationships, identifies key areas of interest and links stakeholders and the public with Branch officials and experts on issues of interest to them.

OCAPI produces a quarterly newsletter aimed at keeping the public up-to-date on Health Canada activities in health promotion and the regulation of health products and food. Visit OCAPI's website at <http://ocapi.hc-sc.gc.ca>.

