



PEIRTA Newsletter

Prince Edward Island Retired Teachers' Association

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FALL 2021

Greetings to all retired teachers and their families—near and far away. I expect that there have been a significant number of family reunions in P.E.I. and elsewhere since the end of June with our new PEI Passes. We live in the safest province of Canada—let’s keep it that way by staying smart.

Islanders have worked diligently as a team fighting COVID-19, and we need to look forward and continue what we have done in the last 18 months. I heard the song “Lean on Me” today and it hit home as I have been on both ends of supporting and receiving support with/from friends, relatives, and acquaintances. We need to continue working as a team to assist as many people as we can. Personally, I have made many new friends this past 18

months as we have all faced some of the same “new normal” situations and can understand what each of us is experiencing – the good, the bad, and the ugly! The challenge is there for us—we cannot afford to get lax about our actions.

The Executive did meet with Aldene Smallman and Patrick MacFadyen at our June Executive meeting to update each other on activities and priorities for the future. The pre-retirement seminars were in great demand this past year—with waiting lists for both Summerside and Charlottetown sessions. Our meetings during the pandemic have been held at the Hampton Inn and Suites because our Executive group has too many members to utilize the PEITF building (social distancing). Hopefully we can return to our “normal” meeting place in the near future.

The Executive has not met as a group over the summer months (as per usual) but many conversations have occurred among us as we look forward to September and beyond. Our AGM is

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COVID-19 Stats, PE Government Data)

Total cases = 270 (Sept 16)

Age distribution (in years)

< 20	55 (20.4%)
20 to 39	144 (53.3%)
40 to 59	50 (18.5%)
60 to 79	20 (7.4%)
80 and over	1 (0.4%)

Fully vaccinated	7.5%
Partially vaccinated	5.7%
Unvaccinated	86.8%

Vaccinations, PE, Sept 15

At least one	130,114 (92.5%)
Second dose	118,795 (84.5%)

Vaccination Rate, School staffs (PSB)

Overall	90%
Individual schools	71-100%

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Visit our website at
www.peirta.com

From the Editor

In the last newsletter I reported some pretty scary stats on how many seniors in particular are inappropriately medicated, and what some of the consequences might be.

I had no idea at the time that Medavie Blue Cross would, just months later, be offering members of our health plan a benefit that might at least partially address this problem.

Recent communication from Johnson Inc. included information about a new benefit available to us—pharmacogenetic testing. Every member of our plan should have gotten this information, and I hope all of you have read it. I have—several times—and I confess that on first reading I was a little confused about exactly what it was all about. So I did some research to round out my understanding.

As you know, all of us have thousands of inherited genes that make up our DNA. These genes define our unique physical characteristics (height, hair and

eye colour, blood type, etc.). DNA (genetic) testing is increasingly being used in genealogical circles to trace ancestries and identify long lost relatives, and in medicine to help identify those who are at risk of developing specific diseases. Now genetic testing can be used to determine how an individual will respond to or metabolize specific drugs—whether the drugs are likely to be effective, at what dose level, and with what side effects. This is pharmacogenetic testing, which will now be covered under our plan with a \$500 lifetime maximum benefit. The provider will be Pillcheck. The hope is that the availability of this testing will lead to better outcomes for patients, who will be more likely to get the right drug at the right time, as well as providing cost saving for insurance companies, who will be less likely to have to pay for a lot of drugs that aren't appropriate for some people because of their genetic makeup.

Why a \$500 life maximum? It's my understanding that this is the approximate cost of the test, which will be done only once, but will currently cover over 200

drugs. Because our DNA doesn't change, the genetic analysis will apply to new drugs as they become available. The patient will get an annual report with an updated profile.

For more information, I refer you to the article on page 4 titled "Pharmacogenetic testing: A revolutionary new tool in personalized, precision medicine," available online at www.medaviebc.ca. "How Pillcheck pilot can help plan members," available at www.lifehealthpro.ca, is also quite interesting.

PEIRTA Executive does not necessarily agree with opinions expressed in material authored by those other than official representatives of the PEIRTA, and information about opportunities offered by others is for information only—no endorsement is implied.

Next issue February, 2022. Submit material to margstewart@pei.eastlink.ca.

If you wish to read this newsletter online instead of receiving a hard copy, send me an email and I will let you know when each issue should appear on our site and on the PEITF site.

Letters to the editor should be a maximum of 200 words, must include a one-line bio, and may be edited for length.

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President (cont'd from 1)

scheduled for Thursday, November 4 at Credit Union Place in Summerside. We have been working on our program for the day—it changes as do the restrictions: Plan A...Plan B...etc. We will bring to the meeting three resolutions to authorize funds for Island students: a high school Young Leader Award; an Early Childhood Education Bursary at College de L'iLe; and a Bed/MEd candidate bursary. A fourth resolution will deal with RTA operations. The resolutions are printed on pages 5-6. Please give them some consideration before the meeting.

Congratulations are extended to Gilles Arsenault for his recent appointment as Superintendent of the French Language School Board—mes felicitations, Gilles.

By the time that you read this we will know the results of the Federal Election. Hope you all voted to express your choice. We will also have held the 4th Annual PEIRTA Golf Tournament. Details are available in this newsletter.

In closing, we hope that all goes well for students and teachers during the upcoming school year—the ride the last eighteen months has been a difficult one for all involved in education. We still have to see what the long term effects of the pandemic will be. We need to support them all.

The election is over. Which of these is you?



PEIRTA GOLF NEWS ~

Wayne Denman

The PEIRTA held its 4th Annual Golf Tournament at Eagles Glenn of Cavendish on a warm, sunny day. We experimented for this event as we played six different formats—we all had fun and that was the point of it!

We continued our closest to the pin competitions as well as a modified putting contest. Wanda Ellis was the victor on the 11th hole to snag bragging rites for the ladies. Wayne Cutcliffe was victorious on the 17th hole with a shot tight to the pin after being nosed out by Jim MacIntyre on the 6th hole, which was open for all golfers.

Retired teachers had the opportunity to “Beat the Prez” by hitting their balls closer to the pin on a par three. Prez Wayne had a decent day as only seven retirees managed to get inside his shots. In a draw of those who accomplished this feat, Ginette Plourde and Darwin Woods won boasting rights for the next year! Prez Wayne’s putting was not up to snuff as 23 of his colleagues managed to get inside his putts. Wayne said this happened because he putt-ed first and gave them a great read

on the line! Finally, we set up a short hole with a larger cup for competitors to try to get a hole-in-one. There were many close calls but no aces!

The team judged to best “look the part” of a coordinated team decorated their carts and coordinated their attire—a sharp looking crew.

Thanks go out to Doug MacLean (hockey guy), Maurice Bernard (artist), and Chris Irwin ((Titleist) for providing items for the silent auction. Thanks also are extended to the staff at Eagles Glenn for their assistance.

As a result of our various games and silent auction we managed to raise \$917 for the Esther Finkle Walk for Kids.

We will hold our 5th Annual Golf Tournament next September—stay tuned for more information on the 2022 Event.

Editor: Retired teachers who play golf owe Wayne Denman a huge thank-you for all the effort he puts into organizing this tournament each year. So thank you, Wayne, from all of us.

Dear Members,

You are cordially invited to attend the PEIRTA Annual General Meeting to be held at Credit Union Place in Summerside on November 4, 2021.

Wayne

Pharmacogenetic

Testing: A revolutionary new tool in personalized, precision medicine

Posted by **Rebecca Smith** on May 29, 2019

Brown eyes or blue? Tall or short? Full head of hair or bald? You can thank (or blame) your parents for your unique physical features. Our bodies are made up of thousands of genes we inherited from our mothers and fathers that together form our DNA. These genes determine the characteristics that are specific to us, from our eye colour to our blood type.

Genes are also responsible for how we metabolize or process medications. That means we all respond differently to drugs due to variations in our DNA. Genes can be the reason some drugs cause mild to severe side effects, like nausea, weight gain, even abnormal heart rhythms, or no adverse reactions at all.

Now imagine a test that could pinpoint the drugs that may be best for our bodies from a small sample of our saliva.

It could be life changing, right?

Pharmacogenetics makes it possible.

What is pharmacogenetic testing?

Hailed as a revolutionary tool in personalized health care, pharmacogenetics studies our body's ability to respond to certain drug medication treatment, based on our genetic makeup.

The word pharmacogenetics com-

bines the words pharmacology (the study of the uses and effects of medications) and genomics (the study of genes and their functions).

Pharmacogenetic testing (PGx) looks for changes or variants in our genes to match drugs to our unique genome or genetic profile. The predictive insights provided by PGx helps treating physicians identify the right medications at the right dose for optimal health outcomes for their patients.

Who benefits from testing?

This new form of precision medicine has broad implications for all health care stakeholders, including employers and insurers.

*Annual prescription medication expenditures in Canada total over \$30 billion.*¹

Patients can feel better, faster and return to work sooner, confident in their treatment—saving time, worry and expense for all concerned. Ultimately, PGx has the potential to reduce the duration of disability claims, prevent recurrence, and possibly lower drug spends.

It is important to note that these tests look at gene markers to gain predictive insights into a patient's tolerance to certain medications. However, other factors, beyond genes, can also affect our response to drugs such as age, weight, and diet.

Isn't genetic testing prohibited?

PGx is not to be confused with "recreational genetics" that can help us trace our ancestral roots—think AncestryDNA—or genetic testing that reads our DNA to determine

our potential risk for disease.


PGx analyzes only the specific genes involved in drug metabolism to determine the risk of toxicity and side effects. They do not assess a patient's inherited predisposition to disease, which by law, under Bill S-201, prohibits discrimination based on genetic characteristics. PGx does not impact patients' insurance.

*Approximately 95 per cent of the population have at least one genetic variation in enzymes responsible for drug metabolism.*²

Does Medavie Blue Cross offer testing?

We recently announced a pilot project to offer pharmacogenetic testing using [GeneYouIn's Pillcheck™ system](#). It's the latest way our organization is leveraging new innovations and technologies to make sure plan dollars are well spent and that plan members get the best treatment possible.

The pharmacogenetic testing pilot will be offered on a voluntary basis with an initial focus on mental health and pain management claims.

Veronika Litinkski, CEO of GeneYouIn Inc. describes pharmacogenetic testing as a "powerful tool" for containing benefit plan costs and for improving plan members' experiences. She adds that the earlier the service is used to guide treatment, the more beneficial it is for both employee and their employer. In fact, according to Litinkski, targeted programs show an 84 per cent probability of saving between \$200,000 and \$400,000 per 1,000 plan members.³ 

The service complements the many existing case management tools we use for disability claim management; the ultimate goal is to give our plan members and their treating physicians access to tools to help with an effective return to health.

Who receives testing results?

Plan member participation in pharmacogenetic testing is voluntary and confidential. Pillcheck is compliant with all industry regulations that protect data privacy.

Once the testing results are processed, they are forwarded directly to the plan members who can share them with their health care practitioner, at their discretion, to prescribe gene-guided drug therapies and dosages.

Pending results of the pilot, pharmacogenetic testing will be rolled out as an optional benefit to all Medavie Blue Cross plan sponsors.

We believe pharmacogenetics opens up an exciting new frontier in health care that allows plan members to unlock their genetic code to receive the right drug, at the right time—and at the right price for plan sponsors.

Sources:

¹*Do Genetic Tests Belong in Benefit Plans, Benefits and Pensions Monitor, October 2018, by Veronika Litinski, CEO, GeneYouIn Inc.*

²*GeneYouIn Inc.*

³*Do Genetic Tests Belong in Benefit Plans, Benefits and Pensions Monitor, October 2018, by Veronika Litinski, CEO, GeneYouIn Inc.*

Resolutions to be Presented at 2021 AGM

The following executive resolutions will come to the annual meeting for your consideration.

1. Whereas, the regular operations and meeting schedule of the PEIRTA have been severely impacted during the past 18 months by COVID-19; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the current executive of the PEIRTA remain in place for another year.

2. Whereas, the Prince Edward Island Retired Teachers' Association (PEIRTA) is committed to the support of excellence in all aspects of education; and

Whereas, the organization currently awards scholarships and bursaries at the university and college level; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Prince Edward Island Retired Teachers' Association establish one bursary for a student entering the second year of the Early Childhood Education Program at College de l'île. The \$500 award will be awarded annually to a student who has graduated from a Prince Edward Island High School. The College will determine the criteria, create a committee to interview their students, and select the successful candidate.

(Attendu que l'Association des enseignants retraités de l'IPE (PEIRTA) s'est engagée à soutenir l'excellence dans tous les aspects de l'éducation; et

Attendu que l'association remet présentement des bourses d'études au niveau universitaire et collégial;

donc,

qu'il soit résolu, que l'Association des enseignants retraités de l'IPE établisse une bourse pour un étudiant/e entrant en deuxième année du programme d'éducation de la petite enfance au Collège de l'île. Le prix de \$500 .00 sera décerné chaque année à un étudiant/e diplômé d'une école secondaire de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard. Le Collège déterminera les critères, créera un comité pour interviewer ses étudiants et sélectionnera le candidat retenu.

3. Whereas, the Prince Edward Island Retired Teachers' Association (PEIRTA) is committed to the

See **Resolutions**, 6

PEIRTA AGM

Thursday, November 4

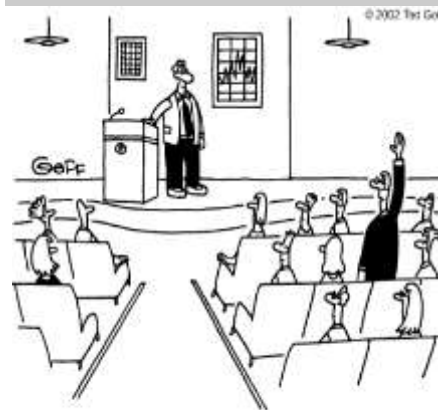
Credit Union Place
Summerside

Registration 9AM –10AM

Meeting 10AM

Speaker(s) TBA

*Lunch will be provided free of charge.



"Could we extend the annual meeting? I still have a lot of complaining to do!"

Resolutions (cont'd from 5)

support of excellence in all aspects of education; and

Whereas, the organization already awards several scholarships/bursaries at the university and college level; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the PEIRTA establish a **Young Leader Award** in Island high schools. A \$200 prize will be awarded annually to one graduating student in each high school in the Public Schools Branch (PSB), one student in the Commission scolaire de langue française (CSLF) West, and one student in the Commission scolaire de langue française East. School staffs will select winners with the following criteria in mind:

A student who demonstrates leadership in school activities;

A student who actively volunteers in community activities;

A student who kindly supports or mentors other students within the school; and

A student who is dedicated to school work.

Note: The CSLF West will be comprised of Ecole Pierre-Chiasson, Evangeline, and Ecole-Sur-Mer, while the CSLF East will include Ecole Francois-Buote and Ecole La-Belle-Cloche.

(Attendu que l'Association des enseignants retraités de l'IPE

(PEIRTA) s'est engagée à soutenir l'excellence dans tous les aspects de l'éducation; et

Attendu que l'organisme remet déjà plusieurs bourses d'études au niveau universitaire et collégial ; par conséquent,

qu'il soit résolu que la PEIRTA établisse un prix du jeune leader dans les écoles secondaires de l'Île. Un prix de 200 \$ sera remis annuellement à un élève finissant de chaque école secondaire de la Direction des écoles publiques (PSB), un élève de la Commission scolaire de langue française (CSLF) Ouest et un élève de la Commission scolaire de langue française Est. Le personnel de l'école sélectionnera les gagnants en tenant compte des critères suivants:

Un étudiant qui fait preuve de leadership dans les activités scolaires;

Un étudiant qui fait activement du bénévolat dans des activités communautaires;

Un étudiant qui soutient gentiment ou encadre d'autres étudiants au sein de l'école ; et

Un étudiant qui se consacre au travail scolaire.

Remarque: Le CSLF Ouest comprendra l'École Pierre-Chiasson, Évangéline et l'École-Sur-Mer, tandis que le CSLF Est comprendra l'École François-Buote et l'École La-Belle-Cloche.)

4. Whereas, the PEIRTA continues to support various aspects of education in PEI; and

Whereas the costs for studies in Education continue to rise; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the PEIRTA establish a \$2000 annual scholarship to support a graduate of an Island high school who is entering a BEd or MEd program as a full-time student at a university with a recognized program in those areas of study.

Booster Shots

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recently recommended an additional dose of the COVID-19 vaccine for those who are moderately or severely immunocompromised in order to provide them with additional protection against the virus. Our CPHO is following their lead. For more information, see *Questions about Third Doses | Government of Prince Edward Island*, online.

Address Changes

If your address changes,

or if you know anyone who has had a change of address and/or is not receiving this newsletter, please have him or her notify our membership chair (contact info on page 2). Bear in mind that your mailing address must include a civic address

The Teachers' Superannuation Fund renamed the PEI Teachers' Pension Plan

It is important to keep your mailing address up-to-date with the Pensions & Benefits office.

Each year the Pensions and Benefits Office distributes pay advice slips, T4As, and newsletters directly to pensioners of the Teachers' Pension Plan (TPP). To ensure you receive these important mailings in a timely manner, please remember to inform the Pensions and Benefits Office if your address changes.

To provide your updated information, please call (902) 368-4200 or email peitpp@gov.pe.ca. You will be asked to provide your name and date of birth to confirm your identity.



Aldene Smallman

Greetings from PEITF. Another summer has passed us by. We have enjoyed a much-needed break, but the back-to-school commercials remind us that it is time to start preparing for the upcoming school year.

As Island families prepare to head back to the classroom, we are still dealing with the challenges of this pandemic and working with our education authorities to plan for a safe and successful school year. We have relied on the guidance of the CPHO to make decisions regarding public health. They have done a tremendous job protecting Islanders. We know, for many, there are concerns about beginning school in September as we see COVID-19 cases increase across the country, and the presence of the Delta variant is cause for alarm as well. We continue to support measures that keep our school staffs and students safe. Hearing from the government that vaccination uptake rates overall on PEI are high is encouraging. We continue to promote vaccinations for all Islanders to strengthen protection from COVID-19 for

all of us.

As the end of August approaches, teachers are envisioning what their classroom and year will look like! As a retired teacher, I am sure that you can remember the anticipation associated with starting another year! This profession is increasingly more demanding. Teachers face many challenges and often express concerns around workload and the ever-expanding roles they are taking on within their school environment.

For me, this year marks twenty-eight years in the profession. My passion for education has not wavered. In fact, it has only been ignited, as I am privileged to witness what teachers are doing in the

classrooms across our province. The public education system has certainly changed since the beginning of my career. It is a system that continually requires educators to respond to society and the learning needs of students.

We look forward to another successful and productive school year. Thank you for your continued support. Your past and present contributions are appreciated. I wish you a wonderful autumn ahead.

*Coming soon to
PEI!*



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Distracted Driving

CAA recently reported that 21% of annual fatal collisions are the result of distracted driving. (*CAA Magazine*, Fall, 2021, p. 42)

CAA's website (www.caa.ca) devotes a good deal of time to the subject of distracted driving—what it is, who does it, and what are the consequences. Among other things, they report the following:

- 47% of Canadians admit that they have typed out or used the voice-memo feature to send a message while driving. (CAA polling)
- Sending or reading a text takes your eyes off the road for 5 seconds. At 90 km/h, that's like driving the length of an entire football field with your eyes closed. (National Highway Traffic Safety)
- Mobile phone use while driving leads to 1.6 million crashes annually. (National Safety Council, 2019)



- Almost half of Canadians (47%) have programmed a destination on their GPS or mobile device while driving. (CAA polling, 2020)
- Distracted driving fatalities have surpassed those caused

by impaired driving in some parts of Canada. (Traffic Injury Research Foundation, 2019)

- The likelihood of a collision is increased 3.6 times when using an electronic device. (Virginia Tech Transportation Institute, 2019)
- 94% of teen drivers acknowledge the dangers of texting and driving, but 35% of those admitted to still doing it. (Think Insure, 2019)
- One study showed that as people grow more comfortable with the technology features in their cars, they are more likely to engage in distracted driving.

Scary stuff, right? And even if I'm not a distracted driver, I should remind myself regularly that someone around me might be, and act accordingly

REMINDER: If you wish to read this newsletter online instead of receiving a hard copy, send me an email at margstewart@pei.eastlink.ca and let me know. I will let you know when each issue should appear on our site and on the PEITF site. Bear in mind that all issues are archived at www.peirta.com and can be accessed at any time.

* *Reminder:* If you plan to travel, check <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories> for current travel advisories, and read your insurance policy very carefully to fully understand your coverage. Call your insurer if you are unclear.

PEITF Travel

Insurance: Update on Pre-Existing Medical Conditions

Our out-of-province travel insurance plan has a 90-day medical stability clause. This means that if you have a pre-existing medical condition, it must be considered medically stable for 90 days prior to your departure date if you are to be covered in the event of a medical emergency related to this condition while you are travelling.

A pre-existing condition is considered stable if the member, in the 90 days before the departure date, has not:

1. Been treated or evaluated for new symptoms or related conditions;
2. Had symptoms that increased in frequency or severity, or examination findings indicate the condition has worsened;
3. Been prescribed a new treatment or change in treatment for the condition.
4. Been admitted to a hospital for the condition; or
5. Been awaiting new treatments or tests regarding the medical condition (does not include routine tests).

Number 3 generally does not include reductions in medication due to improvement in a condition, or regular changes in medication as part of an established treatment plan—but each case must be reviewed individually. A change shortly before departure, for example, with a subsequent reaction, might present problems. So if you have any doubt, call Medavie Blue Cross at 1-800-667-4511, Travel Department, for clarification if you are planning to travel outside PEI.

