



***Questionable management of  
FLU VACCINATION for Seniors  
at a SHOPPERS DRUG MART***

Shoppers Drug Mart manages flu vaccination for *seniors* in a very questionable manner, maybe even dangerous. Beware!

Here is one senior's experience in getting the flu vaccination at a Shoppers Drug Mart...

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Last week, I booked an appointment online at my local Shoppers Drug Mart to get a High-dose vaccine. I thought it went well.

The next day I arrived at the pharmacy for my appointment and checked in at the pharmaceutical counter. The clerk asked me a series of questions: was I on any prescription medication; do I have diabetes; do I have high blood pressure? My replies were all, "No." The staff person informed me that she was switching me to the normal vaccine because I did not meet all the criteria for receipt of the high-dose vaccine.

I responded that *none of those requirements were listed anywhere on the Ontario Ministry of Health's website, nor the Shoppers Drug Mart flu vaccination form* which I had completed as required, online. The only listed criteria I had seen was that the vaccination recipient must be over 65 years old. The clerk repeated insistently that I should receive the normal shot. I asked to see some form of Shoppers Drug Mart's official policy.

After a few minutes of verbal back and forth, the clerk finally relented, " Okay if that's your preference you can have it."

I was directed to wait in another room. After another 15-minute wait, a new staff person addressed me with the same questions.

I explained that as I do not have a family doctor and my last physical examination was about 15 years ago, I did not know my blood pressure, nor if I had diabetes, criteria that must be met to receive the high dose vaccination. The clerk responded that as long as I am not on medication I would be given the normal vaccine. Again, I asked to see the official policy. A few minutes after she left the room, another staff person entered the room.

Presumably staff, the man wore no identification, no badge to confirm he was a Shoppers Drug Mart employee nor did he introduce himself as such to verify his position. So, I do not know if he was a pharmacist, the store manager or even if he was a legitimate employee of the pharmacy.

The same choreography of questions and answers was repeated. The man explained that were *three types of vaccines*, a normal vaccine, a vaccine for "healthy seniors", and the High-dose vaccine for patients who met Ministry prerequisites. Once again, I reiterated that no such information is stated on the health ministry's website and that my wife who does not have any of those medical conditions was given the High-dose vaccination by her family doctor a few days earlier. Could Shoppers Drug Mart be using more stringent criteria than that published by the Ministry? The man replied, "Unless you tell me you have high blood pressure I can't give you the High-dose vaccine." I asked him if he wanted me to take a blood pressure test right then and there. I was sure my blood pressure was very high by this time. He turned, walked out the door saying, "Give it to him."

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Some questions:

- Is it Ministry of Health policy to permit local pharmacies to decide the type of vaccine to be administered to seniors?
- Is the procedure I experienced a Shoppers Drug Mart's corporate policy?
- Where are these corporate policies published?
- Does each pharmacy have local decision-making autonomy?
- Is there really a vaccine specifically for "healthy seniors?"

I sent my questions to the Ontario Ministry of Health. I await their reply.