# **Accessibility of Insulin Pumps**

**Briefing Note – June 2020**

**Issue**

* CNIB has received complaints from Canadians living with diabetes and sight loss regarding the inaccessibility of insulin pumps. End users are unable to independently or safely use their insulin pump because the device must be navigated solely using visual features on a display screen. This is unacceptable given that diabetic retinopathy is the fourth leading cause of sight loss in Canada and the leading cause of blindness in adults in the United States.
* As far as we aware, there are no accessible insulin pumps on the Canadian market currently. There are some that have limited audio features for certain device functions (i.e a beep to let someone know the insulin dosage), but a person still cannot use all the features of the device, such as locking or unlocking it.
* Insulin pump manufacturers have a responsibility to ensure that a significant segment of their end-user market can safely use their device. We have received community feedback that people with sight loss have been advised that they should not use certain pumps as it has been deemed not safe by the manufacturer. Instead of creating further barriers and restrictions based on unfounded fears, pump manufacturers should be designing pumps using universal design features. We do not need a special pump that blind people can use, we need pumps that everyone can use.
* Insulin pump manufacturers have indicated that there is too much red tape to retrofit existing insulin pumps with accessible or audible features because it would be considered a new device by regulating authorities and they would need to restart the entire approval process for the device.

**Recommendations**

* Health Canada and other regulating bodies for healthcare should only approve future healthcare devices that are accessible to all end users. This respects the intentions of the Accessible Canada Act and Canadian Human Rights Act, as well as honouring the Federal government's commitment to accessibility.
* Assistive and healthcare device programs administered by provincial governments should make device accessibility a pre-requisite for being included on their program formularies.
* An as interim solution, manufacturers could create an app that interacts with a person's pump and can be used through the accessibility features of a smartphone**.**
* As a longer-term solution, manufacturers need to ensure that any pumps that are put on the market in the future are fully accessible to people with sight loss. CNIB would be happy to collaborate with manufacturers and their development teams and provide specific feedback on each device on how its accessibility can be improved.

**Background Information**

* Insulin pumps are medical devices that are used by people with diabetes as an alternative to administering insulin through a syringe or pen.
* There are approximately 750,000 people living with diabetic retinopathy in Canada.
* Diabetic retinopathy is the fourth leading cause of blindness in Canada (Cost of Vision Loss Report).