

TECHtalk

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TECH PURSUES HIGHER EDUCATION WHILE TEACHING PHARMACY STUDENTS

WHEN PHARMACY TECHNICIAN ROBIN Andrade learned there would be a School of Pharmacy established at the University of Waterloo in her hometown of Kitchener, Ont., she knew she wanted to “be involved in some way.”

Although she wasn’t sure what role technicians could play, she had heard the school was looking for teaching assistants. Before it

opened in 2008, Andrade was employed as a technician in community pharmacy, and loving it. Working at the School of Pharmacy “wasn’t something I had directed myself towards,” she says. “I knew I wanted to try different things in the pharmacy profession, so I decided, if I have this opportunity to work with pharmacy students, I want to do it. There was no question about it.”

The school needed someone to teach dispensing, she explains. “So, who better than a technician to do it?” With several years of experience in both hospital and community pharmacy since graduating from Mohawk College in 2003 and becoming registered in 2012, Andrade was an ideal candidate. She sent in her resume and landed a job as a teaching assistant. She is now a professional practice instructor responsible for coordinating the Professional Practice program, a lab-based course designed as an introduction to the practice of pharmacy. Her curriculum has evolved along with the pharmacy technician scope of practice. “It’s everything you could think of in community that’s within the technician scope of practice in terms of dispensing.”

The enterprising Andrade continues to pursue higher education herself; she recently completed her Bachelor of Adult Education degree from Brock University and starts a Master of Education at the University of Toronto this fall—all while raising two young children with her husband, a pharmacist who also teaches at the School of Pharmacy.

Her commitment to education and passion for pharmacy have been recognized by both her students and her peers: she was the recipient of the 2022 Excellence in Pharmacy Teaching Award from the School of Pharmacy, and the 2022 Pharmacy Technician of the Year by the Ontario Pharmacists Association (OPA). “Nominators clearly indicated that Andrade is a favourite instructor, consistently described as approachable and supportive,” said the School of Pharmacy in announcing her award. Thrilled



but modest, Andrade credits the “amazing instructors that I work with and look up to and go to for advice and mentorship.”

Similarly, she says of the OPA award: “There are so many great techs out there, and I just want to give it to all of them too, because I know how hard it was for all the pharmacy professionals over the year. I want to make sure everybody’s recognized.”

In the future, Andrade would like to help design courses. “I really like online learning and designing courses for online,” she says. “And now, since I’ve done so many of them, I feel I have a good grasp on what works well and what doesn’t.” (The Masters program she is taking is specific to online learning and curriculum and pedagogy.)

Andrade’s advice to technicians in any capacity is to “work for someone who lets you work to your full potential because you will feel more fulfilled if you’re doing your whole role.” She is a tireless advocate for higher wages for techs and urges them to advocate for themselves as well. “Financially, being a technician is getting better, but it should still be a more balanced pay,” she asserts. “I know how hard the job is, so it is important to do that.”

Despite those challenges, she says a career as a pharmacy technician “opens

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PTCB launches new certificate for pharmacy technicians

THE U.S.-BASED PHARMACY TECHNICIAN Certification Board (PTCB) has launched a Supply Chain and Inventory Management Certificate for pharmacy technicians. The advanced credential assesses technicians’ knowledge of laws and regulations, administrative processes, inventory management, documentation requirements, and key players in the supply chain.

“Medications go through a lot of steps before they even get to the patient,” noted PTCB executive director and CEO William Schimmel in a release. “Pharmacy technicians are integral to the process, and we want to make sure they have the tools and best practices they need to shepherd medications safely to their patients.”

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Lessons learned: protect privacy, confidentiality of patients

ALBERTA COLLEGE OF PHARMACY (ACP) reminds registrants that the requirements to properly collect, use, disclose and safeguard their patients' health information is foundational to the relationship between pharmacy professionals and patients. When health information is accessed and used for an unauthorized purpose, this relationship is eroded, as is the integrity of the profession.

The consequences are significant. ACP cited the case of a pharmacist who was found to have accessed a previous patient's health information on four separate occasions after the patient had terminated the patient-pharmacist relationship. Even though there was no disclosure of patient health information, the ACP Hearing Tribunal imposed severe penalties, including a payment of \$10,000 and a three-month suspension.

ACP suggests pharmacy professionals review the publication, *Helping pharmacists and pharmacy technicians understand the Health Information Act* at <https://abpharmacy.ca/sites/default/files/HIAGuide.pdf>.

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P.E.I. techs must obtain CPR/first aid to administer injections

AS PHARMACY TECHNICIANS IN PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND AWAIT authority to provide drugs by injection—expected to take effect in early October—the P.E.I. College of Pharmacy has updated its Policy RP.11 CPR/First Aid requirements in anticipation. The update reflects a new requirement for pharmacy technicians to obtain and retain current CPR and First Aid certification before they are permitted to administer drugs by injection.

The policy states that "pharmacy technicians who hold an authorization to administer drugs are required to show evidence of CPR and First Aid certification at the time of application for the authorization, and maintain the certification for the period of the authorization."

For more information, visit [RP11-CPR-First-Aid-Requirements-Approved-June-2022.pdf](#)

Hospital outpatient meds now included in N.S. DIS

THE NOVA SCOTIA COLLEGE OF PHARMACISTS NOTES that outpatient medications dispensed by hospital pharmacies are now entered into the Nova Scotia Drug Information System (NS DIS). This was not previously the case.

The change means that hospital-dispensed medications may now be included in the DIS Drug Use Review process and may trigger drug interaction or other warnings. Many of these hospital medications are being used in clinically significant drug regimens for cancer, HIV, anti-rejection for organ transplant, and schizophrenia.

However, these medications may not be readily apparent in the patient's NS DIS profile in community pharmacies, since they are entered differently. Therefore, pharmacy practitioners need to know how to query their specific software system so they can appropriately identify and address warnings flagged by the NS DIS. The College advises practitioners who are unsure of how to do this to contact their software support. It also warns that there are still instances where medications will not be in a patient's NS DIS record, so pharmacy practitioners must continue to routinely ask patients about other medications in order to update their profile.

CPhA provides resources re Indigenous health and LGBT2SQ+ patient health

“**INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA, HEALTH-CARE DISPARITIES**, and racism in all its forms continue to undermine the health of Indigenous patients and their trust in the healthcare system,” notes the Canadian Pharmacists Association (CPhA). “As a key entry point to our health system, the pharmacy community has an essential role to play in implementing culturally safe, patient-centered care across Canada.”

To support pharmacy professionals in their practice, CPhA has compiled an extensive collection of resources, in a variety of media, at [Resource Round-up: Indigenous health - English \(pharmacists.ca\)](#).

Pharmacy professionals can also help provide LGBT2SQ+ patients with accessible, gender-affirming and inclusive care in their communities, says the Association. To that end, it has listed helpful links for both healthcare providers and pharmacy. The latter category includes an Ontario Pharmacists Association accredited online course for pharmacy technicians and pharmacists, titled [Providing LGBTQ+ Inclusive Care at Your Pharmacy](#).

To access the list, visit [Resource Round-up: LGBT2SQ+ patient health - English \(pharmacists.ca\)](#).

B.C. modernizes Jurisprudence Exam

AFTER A COVID-19-IMPOSED DELAY, the College of Pharmacists of British Columbia has completed the modernization of its Jurisprudence Exam (JE).

Every five to seven years, the College conducts a full review of its JE, in accordance with international assessment standards. The review helps to maintain the JE’s effectiveness as an assessment tool for ensuring that prospective pharmacy technicians and pharmacists understand their responsibilities to patients and the public under the relevant legislation.

At the start of the project in March 2021, the College invited all pharmacy technicians and pharmacists to take part in the JE development process, selecting participants based on their practice setting and experience. After receiving training, participants provided input into one or more of the six stages of the JE development process.

The JE now consists of 150 questions, of which 125 are scored. Unscored questions are included to determine their statistical performance before becoming scored questions. The College will continue to develop new questions through item-writing workshops in the coming years, again involving pharmacy technicians in the process.

Participating pharmacy technicians in the recent project included Atamjit Bassi, Vanessa Lee, Alana Rudgeley, Leanne Suchanek and Margaret Willcox.

NAPRA seeks panelists to assess language proficiency

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PHARMACY REGULATORY AUTHORITIES (NAPRA) is seeking pharmacy technicians and pharmacists from across Canada to serve as panelists in setting standards to assess language proficiency in English and French for safe and effective practice in Canada.

Experienced, practising pharmacy technicians who are proficient in English, French, or both, are invited to complete the [NAPRA Standard-Setting Workshop: Expression of Interest Survey](#).

Workshops will likely be held sometime between January and March 2023. At this point, NAPRA is creating a pool of candidates from which to select the final panelists. To allow for diverse representative, standard-setting panels, candidates will be chosen based on language, demographic representation, geographic location, and relevant experience/expertise.

Each workshop will last approximately 2.5 days, during which time panelists will review test materials and sample performance and decide on the pass scores for minimally competent candidates. Panelists will be reimbursed for costs associated with travel to the workshop locations in accordance with NAPRA policy, as well as receive an honorarium.

BY THE NUMBERS

CROSS-COUNTRY TECH CHECK 2021

Newfoundland/Labrador:

233 pharmacy technicians

- Community: 78
- Hospital: 150
- Other: 5

+27 vs. 2020

Ontario:

5,471 pharmacy technicians

- Community: 1,848
- Hospital and other healthcare facilities: 3,197
- Association/academia/government: 82
- Industry/other: 72
- Pharmacy corporate office/professional practice/clinic: 17
- No workplace recorded: 246

+403* vs. 2020

Manitoba:

228 listed pharmacy technicians

+17 vs. 2020

Saskatchewan:

379 pharmacy technicians

- Community: 140
- Hospital: 216
- Other: 23

+4 vs. 2020

British Columbia:

1,731 pharmacy technicians

- Pre-registration:** 172
- Temporary registration: 5
- Non-practising registration: 16

+109 vs. 2020

Pharmacy Examining Board of

Canada: 733 names added to

Pharmacy Technician Register

+272 vs. 2020

Total since 2009: 12,257

Sources: 2021 Annual Reports

*includes registrants who re-registered with the College

**Those currently registered as a practising pharmacy technician in another Canadian province or territory, or new graduates of a CCAPP-accredited pharmacy tech program.

>> PROFILE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

worlds to many different opportunities” in many different environments, including tech education. “Talk to your educators [as] those roles are always there,” she says. “It might be hard at first, but it’s really rewarding. There are always people out there who will help you achieve your goals. Don’t be afraid to ask.”

Techs can help parents with back-to-school issues

WITH CHILDREN NOW BACK AT SCHOOL, pharmacy technicians can help parents (and pharmacists, by collecting information and referring) with some common health issues that may need to be addressed, including head lice, vaccinations and OTC products.

Nit picking

Those pesky head lice often make their appearance during the school year when children have more contact with one another. And while lice are not known to spread disease, they seldom go away if left untreated. They are also most common among younger children and the household members of infested children, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

The nits are the eggs laid by the adult female head louse (twice a day!) at the base of the hair shaft, usually behind the ears or at the hairline at the base of the neck. They are very small—about the size of a knot in thread—and are hard to see. They often appear yellow or white, although live nits sometimes seem to have the same hair colour as that of the infested person. An adult head louse can live about 30 days on a person's head, feeding on blood and continuing to multiply and spread.

Head-to-head contact with an already infested person is the most common way to get head lice, although rarely they can be spread by sharing clothing or belongings. Despite some common misconceptions, personal hygiene in the home or school is not associated with the presence of head lice.

Symptoms of head lice may include:

- Tickling feeling of something moving in the hair.
- Itching, caused by an allergic reaction to the saliva of the head louse.
- Irritability and difficulty sleeping; head lice are most active in the dark.
- Sores on the head caused by scratching. These sores can sometimes become infected with bacteria found on the person's skin.

If a parent comes into the pharmacy suspecting their child has head lice, Lucy Wang, pharmacist at Cliffway Pharmacy in Mississauga, Ont., suggests pharmacy technicians ask them:

- Is there presence of live lice and/or nits?
- Does anyone else in the household have symptoms?

As pharmacists in many provinces are now authorized to prescribe for head lice, Wang says pharmacy technicians could ask if the child or infected family member has any allergies, and if they have had any previous

failed treatments or adverse effects from lice treatments. This information can be provided to the pharmacist when referring the patient for counselling/treatment.

Catching up on vaccines

During the pandemic, many children fell behind on routine vaccinations. According to a joint poll by 19 to Zero and Neighbourhood Pharmacies in 2021, up to 35 per cent of children may have missed a critical routine vaccination.

Wang recommends a flu shot as well as a Meningitis B vaccine. Meningitis B is an uncommon but serious disease that is caused by a bacterial infection of the lining of

the brain and spinal cord. Currently, no provinces or territories cover the cost of Men-B vaccine for all children, but some provide it for children at high risk of getting meningococcal disease, says the Canadian Pediatric Society.

"The technician can help by asking whether the child has received the vaccine and assess the willingness of the parent to vaccinate, taking down any questions or concerns and relaying them to the pharmacist to address," says Wang.

Stocking up on OTCs

The fall is also a good time to stock up on OTC medications, such as fever, cough and cold medications, notes Wang, as well as masks, rapid test kits, and hand sanitizer. Pharmacy technicians can suggest parents have these products on hand.

And with COVID-19 still circulating, and cold and flu season beginning, it is an ideal time to address good hand-hygiene habits for children, at school and elsewhere.

life effects



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