

TECHtalk

JULY 2016

BY THE NUMBERS*

Number of pharmacy technicians practising in Ontario: **3,835** (31% increase since 2014)

Number of new Ontario pharmacy techs by year

2010: **114**
 2011: **318**
 2012: **600**
 2013: **803**
 2014: **1,121**
 2015: **939****

Number of pharmacy technicians who are males: **6%**

Average age of a pharmacy technician in the province: **40** (1% are 60+)

Percentage of pharmacy technicians who took the bridging program to become registered: **79%** (down 4% since 2014)

Number of pharmacy techs by practice type

Community pharmacy: **1,181**
 Hospital or other healthcare facilities: **2,042**
 Association, academia, or government: **56**
 Industry or other: **39**
 Pharmacy corporate office, professional practice or clinic: **12**

*Figures for Ontario, as of December 31, 2015.

**Decline due to deadline of January 1, 2015, for completing bridging education program registration requirement.

Source: 2015 Annual Report of the Ontario College of Pharmacists.

ACCREDITED CE LESSON INCLUDED:

Controlled Substances: Dispensing and Destruction

Accredited by the Canadian Council on Continuing Education in Pharmacy



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PHARMACY ASSISTANT FINDS FULFILLMENT IN SPECIAL PROJECTS

FOR ANGELA MOUZAKITIS, THE JOB IS

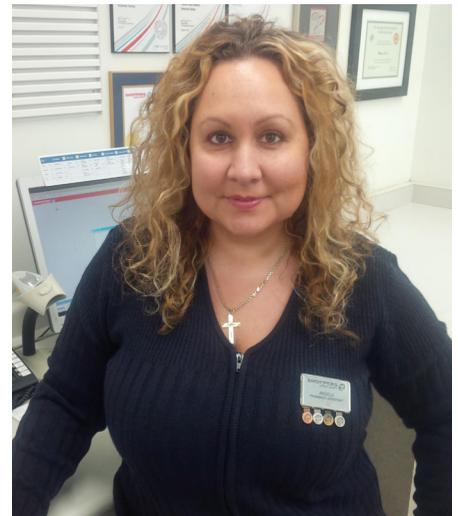
what you make of it. And she has made the most of her position as head pharmacy assistant at a Shoppers Drug Mart (SDM) community pharmacy in east Toronto.

It helps that she has had the benefit of working alongside the pharmacy's innovative owner, John Papastergiou, for the past 14 years. "With John branching out into so many other things, I've been able to experience that with him," says Mouzakitis, noting that her boss has initiated several projects, such as once- or twice-monthly clinics she organizes and recruits patients for.

These in-store clinics include diabetes, cholesterol screening, foot care, and, most recently, research into the growing field of pharmacogenomics—the study of how genes affect a person's response to drugs. "For patients who are on multiple medications, we're checking to see if their body is absorbing certain chemicals, because something could work for you and not for me," says Mouzakitis. "Sometimes, patients have to go through multiple medications and different chemicals to find the right one. Pharmacogenomics is fairly new, and going to be the future."

In addition to coordinating the clinics and performing her day-to-day work—scheduling the assistants for Papastergiou's two pharmacies, managing inventory control, setting up daily deliveries for patients—she does diabetes checks for patients over a three-month period. She also books appointments for the pharmacists to visit elderly or housebound patients to review their medications.

With 14 years' experience at SDM and four years before that at a small independent pharmacy, Mouzakitis has learned on the job. She is not regulated, and her formal pharmacy training consists of a series of courses offered by SDM. While she admits she didn't seize the opportunity to become regulated before the door closed on bridging courses in Ontario, she is still a firm believer in the concept. "I think it's a great opportunity," she says. "If people are looking into moving forward in their career, they should definitely get regulated." Although she



doesn't feel restricted by her scope of practice, she would have liked the authority to perform product checks that regulation would have granted. "So on top of doing what I do, which I love, I would be able to really work alongside the pharmacist," she says, adding that registration "is sort of the future for me."

Born and raised in the cosmopolitan neighbourhood known as "Greektown" where the pharmacy is situated, Mouzakitis enjoys a special rapport with the multi-ethnic patients. As the pharmacy is within walking distance for many patients, they frequently pop in with questions to which Mouzakitis vows to find an answer from the appropriate source. "Apparently, I'm known for being very resourceful," she chuckles. "One way or another, I'm going to get them an answer. That's what they're used to, and I think that is why I really love what I'm doing."

Given the way in which pharmacy is evolving, opening up new opportunities for both assistants and technicians, Mouzakitis says she could "easily see another 14 years" at the SDM pharmacy.

And that's welcome news to the many patients who take comfort in seeing her friendly, familiar face at the dispensary.

Tech Talk is endorsed by:



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PEBC posts revisions to tech Qualifying Exam

THE PHARMACY EXAMINING BOARD OF Canada (PEBC) has approved a revised blueprint for the Pharmacy Technician Qualifying Examination, and will implement it for this summer's administration.

The blueprint is based on the National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities' (NAPRA) 2014 Professional Competencies for Canadian Pharmacy Technicians at Entry to Practice. The Competencies document informs candidates about what the exam will test, and guides PEBC to design exams that are comparable from one administration to the next, giving all candidates equal opportunity to show whether or not they possess the competencies necessary to practise safely and effectively in Canada.

Qualifying examinations in Part I (Multiple-Choice Question—MCQ) and station tasks in Part II (Objective Structured Performance Examination—OSPE) are linked to these national competencies. The competencies for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians are closely aligned, with each group taking responsibility for their respective roles while working collaboratively.

PEBC advises all candidates to review the blueprint thoroughly and determine whether or not they are ready to practise as a registered pharmacy technician, or if they need more preparation or experience in any competency area before taking the Qualifying Examination.

To view the blueprint chart, visit http://www.pebc.ca/index.php/ci_id/3082/la_id/1.htm.

Take some tips on writing effective resumé

A RESUMÉ HAS ONE PURPOSE—TO GET

you a job interview, said Judy Fox Lee, Employment Counsellor, Community Employment Resource Centre, speaking to delegates at this year's Professional Development Conference, sponsored by the Canadian Association of Pharmacy Technicians (CAPT).

"There are many options for format, style, content and design," she said. "Consider all of these options and make your own choices." Lee outlined three current best practices for creating resumé that will stand out.

#1: Replace "Objective" with a personal branding statement. Whereas an objective focuses on what you want and your job goals, a branding statement gives the employer reasons why they would want to hire you. This statement can consist of a brief paragraph, a list of bulleted points, a mini table, or a combination of these to express the most valuable information about you. It could be called "Personal Profile," "Professional Summary," "Professional Profile," or "Highlights of Qualifications."

For example: "Professional Profile: Resourceful, talented regulated pharmacy technician with two years' experience in preparing, packaging, and distributing medications for patients, as well as managing drug inventories and client records."

#2: Understand the difference between

chronological, skills-based (or "functional"), and hybrid resumé, and decide which format is best in your situation.

A chronological resumé summarizes your work experience and education by time period, listing your most recent experience first. A skills-based resumé could list skills/experience under possible headings such as "Prescriptions and compounding," "Patient services and communications," "Inventory database and records management," and "Staff and pharmacy management," thereby eliminating repetition in job descriptions. A hybrid resumé uses elements of both formats. For example, a brief Professional Profile paragraph could be followed by a shorter Skills Summary section, a chronological job listing with one summary statement of the highest responsibilities under each job, and then sections on Volunteering and Education.

#3: Some suggested items to omit: acronyms that are not common knowledge; articles and pronouns (e.g., "the," "a," "I")—if the idea still reads smoothly without any of these words; salary expectations (not until a job offer is made); personal information, such as race and age; and political/religious affiliations. Rather than stating "References available on request," Lee suggested bringing them to the interview, using the same page heading as your resumé. For more information, e-mail: jfoxlee@cercottawa.ca.

SCPP waives registration limit, CEU requirements

THE SASKATCHEWAN COLLEGE OF Pharmacy Professionals (SCPP) has acknowledged that some 2015 graduates from accredited pharmacy technician programs, through no fault of their own, are having difficulty meeting the one-year limit to register as members. This is because

not all employers have finalized their processes within their workplace to allow candidates to begin their Structured Practical Training (SPT). As well, a single pharmacy might have a number of pharmacy technician candidates to move through

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A lifetime of learning

FOR THOSE WHO HAVE EARNED THEIR pharmacy technician designation, the learning doesn't stop there. Being a professional means staying on top of your game and following current best practices, Arthur Whetstone, executive director, Canadian Council on Continuing Education in Pharmacy (CCCEP), told delegates at this year's Professional Development Conference sponsored by the CAPT.

While registered techs are competent at entry to practice, it is both a legislative responsibility and an ethical obligation that they maintain their knowledge and skills throughout their careers, noted Rahila Ovais, R.Ph.T., continuing competency program specialist, Ontario College of Pharmacists (OCP), speaking at the same session.

However, these requirements vary by jurisdiction. For example, in some areas, techs must collect continuing education units (CEUs), while in others, they must demonstrate competence through performance-based assessment.

Lifelong learning comprises both continuing (professional) education (CE) and continuing professional development (CPD), said Whetstone. Whereas CE is a learning activity or event, CPD is an approach to learning that incorporates both traditional CE and unstructured/workplace learning.

That's the theory behind OCP's CPD model. As Ovais explained, the model is a cycle where individual practitioners assess their learning needs, create a personal learning plan, implement the plan, and evaluate the effectiveness of the education as it applies to practice.

The model consists of five steps:

- 1. Self-assess:** Reflect on one's practice to identify learning needs, both those required to maintain competence and those needed to advance professionally.

CCCEP-CERTIFIED COURSES

Pharmacy technicians seeking quality courses can look to the Canadian Council on Continuing Education in Pharmacy (CCCEP), the national organization that reviews and accredits education programs provided nationally.

CCCEP recently launched initiatives aimed at encouraging providers to create more continuing education opportunities for Canada's licensed pharmacy technicians.

The CCCEP website lists live and online programs, from a variety of providers, that have received accreditation, including a few specifically targeted at pharmacy technicians. Visit http://www.cccep.ca/program_search.php?search_text= to view the list.

- 2. Plan:** Create a plan to help ensure that those goals are achieved. Identify and document resources or activities that will help achieve goals, and set a target date for completion.

- 3. Act:** Complete learning outlined in the plan.

- 4. Document:** Record educational activities.

- 5. Evaluate:** Identify what was learned and how it can be incorporated into practice.

CPD may be either planned—at set time intervals or just-in-time, depending on the situation—or unplanned, turning an experience into a learning moment, noted Whetstone.

In Ontario, the requirements have shifted from a system based on CEUs to one that emphasizes CPD, focusing on outcomes in the practitioner's practice.

Members are required to maintain a learning portfolio to demonstrate their commitment to ensuring competency in their practice. The

College's model learning portfolio includes an education action plan, CE log, frequently asked questions log, and professional profile (a record of the member's education and other professional activities).

The College does not set a required number of learning activities or hours to be obtained each year, unlike some other provincial pharmacy regulatory authorities that have annual minimum contact hours at 15 to 20.

Professional development and lifelong learning can encompass a variety of learning activities, says the OCP document "Learning Portfolio." Members could document a structured traditional format, such as a workshop, or non-traditional self-directed learning resources, such as reading articles on a particular topic; any activity that helps achieve a learning goal may be documented.



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