

TECHtalk

JULY/AUGUST 2022

TECH FUELS ENTREPRENEURIAL PASSION BY OWNING HER OWN PHARMACY

AN ENTREPRENEUR AT HEART, HEATHER

Snook had always wanted to own a business. With that in mind, she graduated in 2008 with a business degree from Memorial University in Newfoundland. Then pharmacy—always in the back of her mind—beckoned.

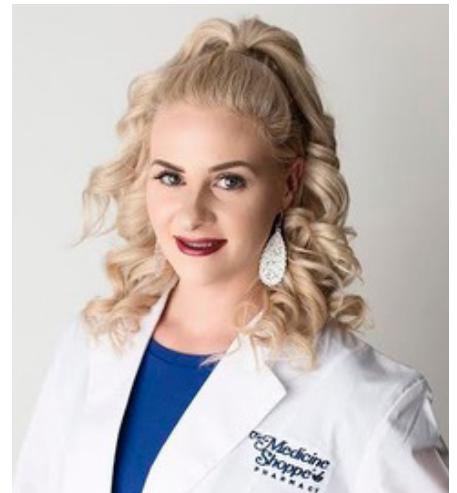
After moving to Alberta, she took two years of pharmacy prerequisite courses at the University of Alberta and in 2011, applied for both the pharmacy and pharmacy technician programs. She was accepted to the technician program at Norquest College, graduated in 2013 and became registered by the end of that year.

The entrepreneurial flame burned even brighter when she found out she didn't need to be a pharmacist to own a pharmacy, as she had thought previously. "I realized that I didn't need to do another four years of school to have my dream when I could have it now!" But with a young child and another on the way, she put that dream on the back burner and began working at a small compounding pharmacy, where she discovered her calling. "As soon as I started working there, I knew: I'm going to own a compounding place!"

Enter pharmacist and co-worker Katrina Wilson-Kubota. By happy coincidence, Snook discovered that Wilson-Kubota was also interested in ownership. While Snook notes she could have just hired a pharmacist/licensee and been the sole owner, "I felt like I needed a partner I could trust and who had a stake in the business."

Snook and Wilson-Kubota joined the Medicine Shoppe franchise and in March 2020, The Medicine Shoppe Spruce Grove Compounding Centre was open for business, but only in theory. Caught in the first wave of COVID-19, the partners had to wait a month until the Alberta College of Pharmacy devised a way to officially open a pharmacy during the pandemic.

Although the pandemic may have delayed the opening, it certainly didn't hurt business. With many doctors' offices closed and pharmacies overwhelmed, Spruce Grove residents were relieved to find another option for patient care. "We had tons of time, so we were making connections with people and getting to know them," says Snook. "Every day, we had people transfer into us, which isn't typical of a new store opening. But the pandemic really gave us that push, and then when asymptomatic testing came in Alberta, we were the first store in Spruce Grove to do that and we had lots of people transfer as a result." When the pharmacy got vaccinations, the same thing happened. While Snook and many other



pharmacy technicians in Alberta are frustrated that they are not authorized to administer injections, she assists Wilson-Kubota with screening, billing, and other administrative tasks around vaccinations.

Besides running the compounding lab, Snook assumes whatever other duties she can. "Katrina, as a pharmacist and licensee, has a lot of responsibility that I can't do, so I take on as many of the other tasks that I can to alleviate her role," says Snook. That includes front-store ordering, inventory receiving and pricing, marketing/advertising, social media postings, special events, and donations throughout the year.

Achieving their dream of ownership hasn't come without a great deal of hard work and family support. Both partners work six days a week and, in the early days especially, their children and husbands often pitched in. They now have a full-time assistant and a part-time pharmacist to help ease the load.

Snook has taken her own advice to heart when she urges new technicians to "fight" for what they want. "If you see it, you can do it, and you can advocate for your position," she says, noting that pharmacy techs can have a bigger role and a bigger voice in pharmacy. "I like to be a pioneer of our time and then others can be pioneers too."

OCP calls for tech mentors

THE ONTARIO COLLEGE OF PHARMACISTS (OCP) is recruiting pharmacy technicians and pharmacists to serve as a mentor for registrants.

The College is seeking pharmacy leaders who are committed to serving and protecting the public and who have a strong desire to uphold the standards of the profession. It welcomes techs who have the knowledge, skills, and experience to provide mentorship in specific areas of practice, and invites those interested in learning more about the role of a College mentor to complete the [OCP Mentor Expression of Interest Survey](#).

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PTSA publishes Part 2 of tech survey results

A YEAR AFTER CONDUCTING A SURVEY to learn more about pharmacy technicians and their roles, the Pharmacy Technician Society of Alberta (PTSA) has published Part 2 of the results, in which it discusses practice barriers, wages, support for expanded roles, and future goals.

While many respondents said they had not experienced any barriers to hiring regulated pharmacy technicians and pharmacy technicians working to full scope, others noted that they faced barriers consistently. The top reasons cited for not working to full scope included staffing/funding, understanding of scope, confidence and motivation, employer policies, and practice models/workflows. Only 56% of respondents claimed that their workplace had a thorough understanding of the pharmacy technician's scope of practice.

The majority of pharmacy technician wages reported ranged from \$25 to \$39 per hour, but 3% of respondents reported wages of less than \$20 per hour. The majority of respondents (60%) thought that between \$30 to \$39 was a reasonable wage for a pharmacy technician, while pharmacist managers or pharmacy licensees generally thought a wage range of \$20 to \$34

was reasonable. This compares with pharmacy technician managers, who reported a reasonable wage range as \$30 to \$44 per hour.

While pharmacy technicians in Alberta are now authorized to collect a throat swab for the purposes of COVID-19 testing, respondents thought performing other point-of-care tests was an area in which techs could take a greater role. Seventy per cent of respondents thought techs should be granted authorization to procure, receive, and destroy narcotics and to receive verbal prescriptions for controlled substances. Witnessing the ingestion of opioid agonist therapy medications was supported by about 60% of respondents, while more than 70% supported authorizing pharmacy techs to administer drugs and vaccines by injection, still not permitted in Alberta.

PTSA says enabling the integration of pharmacy technicians into practice is a priority for the Association, and the survey results will be used to guide the work it is doing.

For more information, visit [Pharmacy Technician Practice in Alberta: Survey Results Part 2 - PTSA](#). For Part 1, see [Pharmacy Technician Practice in Alberta: Survey Results - PTSA](#).

ACP mandates time-delayed safes in community pharmacies

IN AN EFFORT TO MAKE COMMUNITY pharmacies safer for staff and patients—and to make the drug supply more secure—the Alberta College of Pharmacy (ACP) is requiring all community pharmacies to store narcotics and other high-risk drugs in time-delayed safes as of July 1, 2022.

In approving the amendments to the Standards for the Operation of Licensed Pharmacies, ACP considered data that indicated significant increases in pharmacy armed robberies across Alberta. Pharmacies throughout the province have been equipped with signage posted at all external entrances and at the pharmacy counter to ensure that all who enter are aware of the use of time-delayed safes. ACP has also recommended that pharmacies take additional security measures, such as video surveillance systems, alarm systems, and limiting the quantity of narcotics and other high-risk drugs in stock.

Community pharmacies in British Columbia have been required to have time-delayed safes to store narcotic drugs since September 2015. Meanwhile in Ontario, where the occurrence of robberies in pharmacies has also escalated, the Ontario College of Pharmacists (OCP), in collaboration with Peel Regional Police, shares three tips to help pharmacies prevent robberies.

1) Make your pharmacy a less attractive target. Assess the overall design of the pharmacy and security features. Window protection, locked doors, locked cabinets/drawers, video surveillance, and a narcotic safe are recommended. Maintain proper lighting, both inside and outside the pharmacy. If the pharmacy is located in a larger retail space, the dispensary should be on a separate alarm zone.

2) Video surveillance. Consider using a quality security system that could alert management to issues when no one is onsite, alert authorities if a robbery occurs while staff are onsite, and help in identifying a subject should there be a robbery or an attempted robbery. Select the right number of cameras to properly capture the pharmacy and ensure that at least two staff are trained on how to use and review video surveillance.

3) Staff training and behaviour. Evaluate policies and procedures for staff training and behaviour, including ensuring that staff understand they should not discuss pharmacy security procedures with anyone outside of the pharmacy. Provide staff with robbery prevention training and ensure that periodic reviews and information refreshers are shared.

For more information, visit [3 Tips to Prevent Pharmacy Robberies - Pharmacy Connection](#).

PTSA gears up for extensive virtual conference program

THE PHARMACY TECHNICIAN SOCIETY of Alberta has posted some of the topics that are on tap at its 2022 Annual Conference, with the theme “Pharmacy Technicians Raising the Bar.” This year, the virtual event will feature both pre-recorded, on-demand sessions and a live conference. For one week prior to the live conference (September 3-9), delegates can view pre-recorded education and activity sessions on demand, covering such topics as hazardous drug safety skills, reflective learning for continuing competence, and what PTSA Committees do.

The live conference begins September 10 featuring sessions on:

- Cultural safety and trauma informed care: an Indigenous perspective
- Veterinary compounding
- Point-of-care testing
- Quality assurance in pharmacy

On Day 2 (September 11), there will be presentations and discussions on:

- Professional identity
- Pharmacy technician leaders panel
- Insulin pumps and continuous glucose monitors
- PTSA Annual General Meeting and Townhall

For more information, visit [Conference Program - PTSA](#).

OCP develops EDI strategy, recruits techs in advisory group

THE ONTARIO COLLEGE OF PHARMACISTS (OCP) is developing a formal equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) strategy to support its public interest mandate and enhance its role as the province’s regulator.

As a first step, the College’s board approved a statement expressing its EDI commitment and the relevance of this work to the profession as a whole. It has formed an EDI Advisory Group consisting of three pharmacy technicians, five pharmacists and two members of the public who will meet four to five times between June 2022 and March 2023.

OCP has also shared a list of resources that have been curated from a variety of sources and that explore EDI through a healthcare lens. It urges registrants to review the resources that are most relevant to their interest and practice.

For more information on the EDI strategy and why it is important in pharmacy, visit [EDI Strategy Will Help Promote Learning and Inclusive Experiences - Pharmacy Connection](#) and [3 Reasons why EDI is Important in Pharmacy - Pharmacy Connection](#).

ACP notes distinctions in providing care to animals

ANIMALS AND HUMANS ARE NOT ALIKE when it comes to providing patient care.

That’s the message from the Alberta College of Pharmacy (ACP) to its members. “Updated standards of practice came into effect on January 1, 2022, that include important direction for regulated members who provide care to animals,” notes ACP in a posting. “Animals are a small but very distinct group of patients at many community pharmacies and regulated members must understand their responsibilities and limitations when serving these patients.”

Consequently, regulated members must understand the differences in their scope of

practice when providing services for animal patients versus human patients. Because pharmacy technicians and pharmacists are not animal health experts, their scope is limited to compounding, dispensing, and selling drugs.

For animal patients, start by making sure that the pharmacy has a consistent and clear method to indicate the following on the patient record:

- Name or identifier for the animal or herd
- Species of animal
- Name of the patient agent for the animal
- Whether the animal may enter the food chain

BY THE NUMBERS

Results of AIMS Engagement Survey, February 21 – March 4, 2022*

- Have you ever recorded a medication event (incident or near miss) in the AIMS Pharmapod platform?

YES – 64%

NO – 36%

- For those who have recorded an event, have you done so within the last 12 months?

YES – 82%

NO – 18%

- Do you feel that all incidents that occur in your pharmacy are recorded into the AIMS Pharmapod platform?

YES – 61%

NO – 39%

- Do you feel that all near miss events that occur in your pharmacy are recorded into the AIMS Pharmapod platform?

YES – 38%

NO – 62%

- Top barrier to reporting:
Not enough time to record (**51%**)

- Access to AIMS Pharmapod platform by role:

Pharmacy technician – 21%;

Pharmacy assistant – 37%**

- Number of pharmacies recording medication safety incidents:

2020 – 1,743

2021 – 2,445 (+40%*)**

*Assurance and Improvement in Medication Safety, Patient Safety and Quality Improvement Program of the Ontario College of Pharmacists. Source: OCP Pharmacy Connection, May 26, 2022

**As identified by Designated Managers

***Source: 2021 Annual Report, Ontario College of Pharmacists

- Number of animals treated if the prescription is for a herd of animals

This minimizes the chance of errors, ensures compliance with the standards, and ensures the safety of the animal, says ACP.

Find more information here. [Is your pharmacy ready to provide pharmacy services to animals?](#)

How techs can help travellers

WITH THE LOOSENING OF PANDEMIC

restrictions, many Canadians are eager to resume their wandering ways. And just as increasing numbers of consumers turned to pharmacies to meet a growing range of healthcare needs during the pandemic, they are likely to do the same for travel health services, whether it be immunizations, prescribed/OTC medications, or advice on travel disease risks.

As the first point of contact, pharmacy technicians have an important role to play, starting with gathering information.

When a patient mentions an upcoming trip, the tech could ask several questions before referring them to the pharmacist for clinical advice. For example: departure date, duration of travel, whether a pre-travel consultation has been received, the destination(s) being visited, and the type of travel (resort, cruise, visiting friends and relatives abroad, guided tour, etc.).

“This information is all valuable to the pharmacist performing an assessment of travel-related needs,” says Dr. Sherilyn Houle, assistant professor at the University of Waterloo School of Pharmacy. “If scheduling a pre-travel consultation with the pharmacist, technicians can also ask the patient to bring any vaccination records they have to their appointment, as well as itinerary details, especially if more than one destination is being visited.” Additionally, techs can generate medication profiles for use by the pharmacist when performing a consultation, she says.

Techs can also identify travellers who may not realize that they need a comprehensive pre-travel consultation. For example, they might ask questions of patients requesting larger than usual quantities of medications for travel, to screen whether they may benefit from a consultation with the pharmacist. “If your pharmacy does not offer pre-travel consultations, be aware of local travel clinics or other care providers who do and refer patients accordingly,” suggests Houle. “The most common reason for travellers to not receive a pre-travel consultation is because they didn’t know they should have one—technicians can help change that and make sure travellers are safe and protected from health risks abroad.”

Additionally, prescriptions presented for antibiotics for travellers’ diarrhea, antimalarial drugs, or vaccines commonly used for travelling all present opportunities to promote a pharmacy’s travel health services. Likewise, requests to locate non-prescription items such as sunscreen or insect repellent, especially during the winter months when such products would generally not be required in

Resources for travellers

There are many trusted resources pertaining to personal safety and security, as well as travel-related diseases. Here are some other good resources to refer patients to:

- **Travel Advice and Advisories** - <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories>
- **Registration of Canadians Abroad** - <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/registration>
- **Travel vaccinations** - <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/health-safety/vaccines>
- **Well on Your Way - A Canadian’s Guide to Healthy Travel Abroad** - <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/publications/well-on-your-way>
- **Assistance outside Canada** - <https://travel.gc.ca/assistance>
- **Travelling with medication** - <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/health-safety/medication>
- **Diseases** - <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/health-safety/diseases>
- **Travel Health - Canada.ca** – Public Health Agency of Canada
- **Disease Directory | Travelers’ Health | CDC** – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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life effects



Todd Seals
Living with cancer

Real people, real stories

“My entire life before cancer was based on ‘someday.’ Someday I’ll take a vacation. Someday I’ll work less. Someday I’ll spend more time with family.”

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Get information, tips and advice shared by people living with a chronic condition.



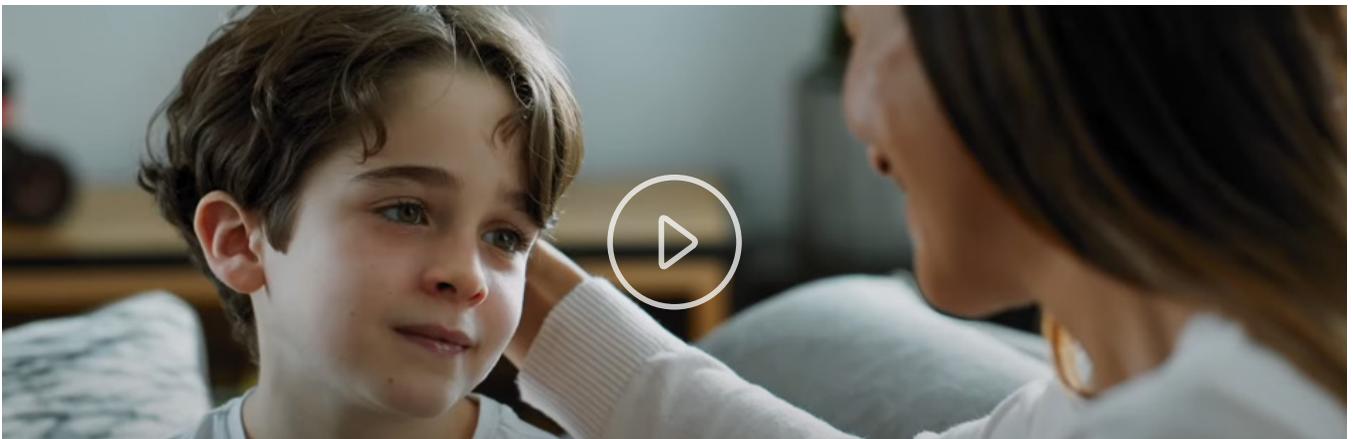
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Canada. "Pharmacy technicians can also offer the pharmacy's vaccination service when patients present with a prescription for a travel-related vaccine, such as hepatitis, versus having the patient take the vaccine offsite for administration," notes Houle.

Pharmacy technicians have important responsibilities around vaccines. "Technicians can perform nearly all roles related to the acquisition, scheduling, preparation and follow-up related to vaccines and, in some provinces, may even be able to administer the vaccines and perform post-administration monitoring with additional training," says Houle. Technicians in all provinces can take a lead role in ensuring appropriate storage of vaccines and maintenance of the cold chain, she says. They also play a key part in ensuring adequate inventory of commonly used vaccines, the ordering of more unique vaccines for a specific patient, scheduling vaccine appointments and follow-up appointments for vaccines requiring multiple doses, and documentation and billing of any vaccines administered.

Notes

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