

TECHtalk

NOVEMBER 2020

MISSIONS ACCOMPLISHED

ERICA BRADBURY PUTS HER SKILLS AND knowledge as a pharmacy technician to work, not only in hospitals in St. John's, NL, but also on medical missions to Tanzania.

To date, Bradbury has made three trips to a Maasai village called Terrat as a volunteer with the Canada–Africa Community Health Alliance (CACHA), an organization dedicated

to improving the health of rural African communities. She joined CACHA in 2017, noting that volunteering overseas “was something I always wanted to do.”

During the nearly three-week-long missions, Bradbury and up to 20 Canadian healthcare professionals from a variety of disciplines set up a clinic, working alongside a local team to treat patients and provide free medication. Her pharmacy technician training has proved to be invaluable. “We’re in charge of all the inventory, all the dispensing,” Bradbury explains. Because some of the medications and dosing are different from those in Canada, she is provided with algorithms that guide her to dispense the proper prescription based on the doctor’s diagnosis. “I learn a whole lot while I’m there,” she adds.

Bradbury and her mission leader also started a program to provide sexual and menstrual health education at the local secondary school. “We noticed that many of the girls either stopped school during their periods or quit school altogether due to a lack of supplies and education. So, in 2019, we raised enough funds to provide every girl at Terrat Secondary School with reusable sanitary pads so they could stay in school and have a necessary supply,” she explains. “We also trained three ladies in the community. The next step is to teach these ladies how to make the kits and to provide them with sewing machines so they can make kits for other girls and women in the village.”

Last year, Bradbury was the pharmacy liaison between the team and the mission lead and is now training to become an assistant mission lead. She is also a CACHA ambassador, one of a handful across Canada to help recruit new volunteers and promote the organization. As volunteers self-fund their missions, Bradbury does relief work in a retail pharmacy to raise the required funds, supplementing her position at Eastern Health’s Health Sciences Centre.

Bradbury, who has been a pharmacy technician since graduating from Eastern College



in 2008 and becoming regulated in 2017, urges current and aspiring techs to “keep an open mind to the different possibilities.” When she started her career, she adds, “I had no idea that it would lead me to Tanzania or that it would lead to the possibility for somebody who wasn’t a doctor or a nurse to go on a medical mission. I’ve met so many amazing people through CACHA and working in the profession in general. And I have learned that we truly are making a difference in many people’s lives.”

And while she believes pharmacy technicians have come “a long way” in their scope of practice, Bradbury thinks they can go even farther, citing the possibility of performing the final check on Total Parenteral Nutrition (TPN), for example. “And I would love to be doing injections,” she enthuses.

Although Bradbury was scheduled to return to Terrat this fall, the pandemic has put the mission on hold. In the meantime, she is busy drumming up recruits among her colleagues for future missions. “A lot of people aren’t really aware that that’s something that pharmacy technicians can do,” she says. “It’s a wonderful learning experience. It’s a chance to grow as a person and it’s absolutely life-changing.” For more information on CACHA, visit www.cacha.ca.

BY THE NUMBERS*

CANADIANS ON COVID-19 TESTING IN PHARMACIES

More likely to get a test if pharmacists could administer them in their local province: **41%**

“Comfortable” or “very comfortable” with their local pharmacist administering asymptomatic COVID-19 tests: **75%**

More comfortable sending their kids to school if testing was available at more locations: **31%**

More comfortable going to work if better access to testing: **38%**

Source: Abacus Data Inc. for Canadian Pharmacists Association, September 2020.

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PTSA 2020 Conference deemed a “virtual” success

ALTHOUGH ATTENDEES AT THE 2020 ANNUAL CONFERENCE of the Pharmacy Technician Society of Alberta (PTSA) couldn't network in person this year, they made the best of it by connecting in what organizers termed “altered reality.”

Over the course of two days, and through an online environment, 270 pharmacy technicians across Canada attended presentations and participated in discussions.

Two of the sessions that generated the most discussion, according to organizers, were Lindsay Mark's presentation about “Maximizing the Role of the Pharmacy Technician in Community Practice,” and a town hall entitled “Are we there yet? Pharmacy Technicians Under Review,” facilitated by PTSA president Morgan Lahl. By the end of the town hall session, a What's App group had been created to continue the discussion and share ideas for change.

During the Conference, PTSA announced Susan Iannuzzi as the winner of its 2020 Professionalism Award. A founding member of PTSA, Iannuzzi works at Calgary Co-op's Central Production Pharmacy, where she and a co-worker developed and implemented a system to standardize compound entries into the Pharmacy's Central Data Management system.

While the format for next year's Conference remains undecided at this point, Association administrators say that “the success of the 2020 Virtual Conference reinforced PTSA's priority of providing more opportunities for online learning.”

BC Centre for Disease Control helps destigmatize COVID-19

THE BC CENTRE FOR DISEASE CONTROL (BCCDC) has developed a new tool to guide written and digital content about COVID-19 that pharmacy technicians may find useful in communicating with patients.

BCCDC COVID-19 Language Guide aims to make COVID-19 content more inclusive and prevent stigmatization of individuals and groups who are often inadvertently excluded from health advice because they are not properly identified or defined.

The Guide provides recommendations on the terms and phrases to use when describing identities and behaviours, and covers language on:

- Disease basics
- Race, ethnic and cultural identities
- Substance use
- Sex, gender, sexual identities, pronouns and gender-inclusive language
- Sexuality and bodies
- Relationships, family status and pregnancy
- Age and ability

To view the Guide, visit <http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/Language-guide.pdf>.

SCPP members must complete Harm Reduction Primer

THE COUNCIL OF THE SASKATCHEWAN COLLEGE OF PHARMACY PROFESSIONALS is addressing the risk of opioid misuse through a series of harm reduction training initiatives. It has made it mandatory for members to complete a course entitled Harm Reduction Primer by May 31, 2021, as a condition of licensure.

The two-hour online course provides a brief overview of trauma-informed care, stigma, the need for culturally safe practices, and the recently updated Saskatchewan Opioid Agonist Therapy (OAT) Standards.

And while it is not mandatory, Council strongly recommends that members also take the Advanced Harm Reduction training. This course, which consists of eight hours online and a seven-hour virtual workshop, includes all the mandatory Primer content, plus detailed information on the management of patients with Opioid Use Disorder and the therapeutics of OAT.

For more information on the harm reduction courses, visit the Continuing Professional Development for Pharmacy Professionals (CPDPP), based out of the University of Saskatchewan, College of Pharmacy and Nutrition website, at <https://pharmacy-nutrition.usask.ca/cpdpp/continuing-education/-/harm-reduction-courses.php>.

PTCB launches program to prevent diversion of controlled substances

AS THE OPIOID CRISIS ESCALATES, the Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (PTCB), the U.S.-based credentialing organization for pharmacy technicians, has launched an Assessment-Based Certificate Program in Controlled Substances Diversion Prevention.

By earning the new credential, PTCB Certified Pharmacy Technicians (CPhTs) demonstrate their specialized knowledge in preventing controlled substance diversion across pharmacy practice settings.

The new certificate is the first credential with formal training for pharmacy technicians in this area and is one of five PTCB specialty certificates that count toward becoming an Advanced Certified Pharmacy Technician (CPhT-Adv).

ACP provides grants to pharmacy tech students

MAINTAINING THAT STUDENTS ARE THE future of the pharmacy profession, every year the Alberta College of Pharmacy (ACP) provides a series of grants for special projects or professional development activities that will advance their professionalism and/or leadership skills.

That includes one Student Professional Development Grant of \$1,000 to a selected pharmacy technician student registered in an Alberta-based accredited Pharmacy Technician program.

The College also awards a \$1,000 prize annually to the pharmacy technician registered with ACP who achieved the highest mark on the Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada's Qualifying Exam in the past calendar year.

For more information, visit <https://abpharmacy.ca/acp-awards>.

Notes

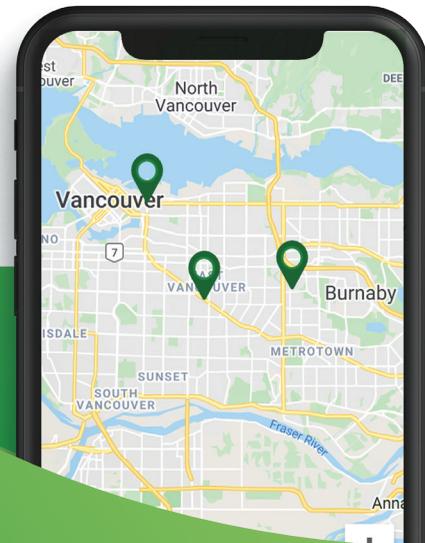


Get your caregiver-friendly pharmacy on the map

Teva Canada's free, accredited Continuing Education course, the Caregiver-Friendly Pharmacy Training Program, prepares pharmacists and pharmacy technicians to recognize and support caregivers with tangible resources and tools.

Building a trusted relationship with caregivers is good for your pharmacy: many caregivers will also require pharmacy products and services for themselves and other family members.

Better yet, once you've successfully completed the program, we'll promote your pharmacy by adding it to our interactive map of Canada to show caregivers the names and locations of pharmacies that have been trained to help them!



To register for the CE, and add your pharmacy to the map once you've completed the CE, visit:

TevaCanada.com/CaregiverPharmacies

This CE has been accredited by CCEP for 1.5 Continuing Education Units.

N.B. urges techs to prioritize opioid crisis

THE NEW BRUNSWICK COLLEGE OF PHARMACISTS (NBCP) reminds pharmacy professionals to continue to prioritize addressing the opioid crisis, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic where opioid use and overdose have continued and even increased in some parts of the country.

“Pharmacists and pharmacy technicians are encouraged to advocate for their clients in procurement of naloxone and work to surmount any barriers to access (including but not limited to economic, awareness, social, cultural and geographical),” says the College in a recent newsletter.

NBCP notes that naloxone “plays a small but important role in the general strategy to address the major health crisis of opioid addiction. Pharmacy professionals in conjunction with other healthcare providers must act to ensure opioids are prescribed rationally according to established evidence so that life-threatening respiratory (and other major) sequelae are avoided.”

The Canadian Pharmacists’ Association lists a number of resources at <https://www.pharmacists.ca/advocacy/opioid-crisis/>.

ACP website explains pharmacy team roles

THE ALBERTA COLLEGE OF PHARMACY (ACP) has developed the “Your Pharmacy Team” website, which explains to the public the differences between pharmacists and pharmacy technicians, and how their work complements each other’s.

The site breaks down the roles and responsibilities of each profession, noting that the pharmacy technician is “your specialist in drug product preparation and distribution” and that pharmacy technicians “take responsibility for the accuracy of every prescription that they prepare.”

It describes other technician responsibilities: compounding drugs; collecting and recording health information; working with the pharmacist to regularly review that drugs are stored, prepared and distributed in a safe and effective manner; helping patients make informed choices about healthcare aids and devices, and training on how to use them properly; and assisting patients in selecting non-prescription products while understanding when to refer patients to the pharmacist.

To learn more, visit <https://yourpharmacyteam.squarespace.com>.

CSHP adds Cannabis Pharmacy Specialty Network

A NEW CANNABIS PHARMACY SPECIALTY NETWORK (PSN) joins the growing list of existing PSNs in which members of the Canadian Society of Hospital Pharmacists (CSHP)—including pharmacy technicians—can participate. The Cannabis PSN connects and supports pharmacists and other healthcare professionals providing care for the diverse group of patients who use cannabis, whether medical or recreational.

There are currently 27 PSNs on a wide range of topics, including compounding, medication safety and COVID-19. Pharmacy technician Dana Lyons, who is also president of the Alberta College of Pharmacy, chairs a PSN on Medication Distribution that discusses best practices related to medication distribution functions. Pharmacy technicians and pharmacists share related practice resources and connect with each other to communicate ideas on how the scope of a pharmacy technician is influencing medication distribution being utilized to its fullest potential. For more information, visit <https://cshp.ca/psn-communities>.

Techs take on additional tasks in COVID-19 testing

WHEN PARTICIPATING PHARMACIES IN Alberta and Ontario began asymptomatic testing for COVID-19—much to the relief of consumers who had endured long lineups at assessment centres—pharmacy technicians stepped up to help handle the extra workload.

While policies and procedures continue to evolve as pharmacies finetune their workflow and adjust to oft-changing provincial guidelines, there is no avoiding the significant administrative workload that the testing entails. In the early days of testing in pharmacies in Alberta (the first province to offer the service), pharmacies had to contact every patient with their results, whether negative or positive. As of late September, Albertans who test negative can choose to be informed

of their results through an automated call or text, or online through their Personal Health Record portal. Ontario patients tested in pharmacies access their negative results through the provincial ministry of health website. When a positive test result is identified in either province, the pharmacist must contact the patient directly.

Most pharmacies in Alberta and Ontario require appointments, as initial screening can be done at the time of booking. According to Todd Prochnau, community pharmacist in Sylvan Lake, AB, who participated in the pilot for COVID-19 testing, the booking can be made by a technician or an assistant, who ask the required pre-screening questions first. The night before, or ideally a couple of

THROAT OR NASAL SWAB?

Currently, pharmacists in Ontario have the option of administering an asymptomatic COVID-19 test with a shallow nasal swab (as opposed to the deep nasal swabs performed at assessment centres) or a throat swab. Pharmacists in Alberta administer throat swabs.

hours before the patient's appointment, the pharmacist then conducts a detailed assessment by telephone to ensure the patient is still asymptomatic, explains Prochnau. He says that is when his technicians are most helpful in covering work when he is tied up for an extended period of time conducting a telephone assessment, or occupied doing a test.

Pharmacist Jessica Hadfield in Valleyview, AB, takes a slightly different approach. She notes that her pharmacy does tests only on a walk-in basis, as sometimes patients would not show up on time or the pharmacist would become busy. "Due to walk-in requirements, the registered tech is essential in screening for the COVID asymptomatic test," she says. "A screening questionnaire can take up to 10 minutes to complete. They must also take the patient's temperature and fill out the lab requisition for the pharmacist. Altogether, the data collection can take at least 15 minutes to perform." Technicians must also ensure that the collection tube and hazard bag are labelled with the required patient information.

"I believe we are using our registered tech to her full scope without wasting her time resources as well," says Hadfield. "The assistants are in a better role to clean and prep consultation rooms for the COVID test, freeing up the registered tech to perform the screening. If the registered tech is busy, the assistants also help by filling out the paperwork for the pharmacist."

It takes a team effort to perform the tests safely, accurately and efficiently, says Hadfield. "The test has lots of time requirements for paperwork. In order to help free up the pharmacist, it is essential that all team members participate in the screening process to enable the pharmacist to perform other tasks. Assistants must also share responsibility to help free up the registered tech."

Prochnau muses on the possibility of additional responsibilities for technicians in the future. "It would be interesting to see where things go from here, because really, there could be a technician performing a swab, depending on scope of practice, because the swab itself is very straightforward."

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