

TECHtalk

SEPTEMBER 2016

BY THE NUMBERS WHAT BC PHARMACY TECHS WANT TO LEARN ABOUT

Priority areas:

- Safety and quality: 32.6%
- Expertise in medications and medication use/drug distribution systems: 29.6%
- Professionalism and ethics: 23%
- Collaboration: 14.8%

Highest priority: preventing and managing dispensing errors and incidents

Top three learning formats:

- Online text-based learning (self-directed)
- Printed materials (self-directed)
- Conferences (live)

Top five considerations for learning:

- Accreditation
- Topic
- Costs
- Location/accessibility
- Learning formats

Survey results identified a crucial need to increase the availability of CE programs specific to pharmacy technicians in B.C.

Source: College of Pharmacists of British Columbia, Learning Needs Survey for BC Pharmacy Professionals 2015. Published January 2016.

ACCREDITED CE LESSON INCLUDED:

Managing the dispensary and optimizing medication management support services: the role of the pharmacy technician



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TECH HONOURED FOR DEDICATION TO PROFESSION

WHEN PHARMACY TECHNICIAN JULIA

Jennings accepted a part-time job at a pharmacy in her home town of Elora, Ont., little did she know that 25 years later, she would receive the first ever Outstanding Pharmacy Technician Award from the Ontario Pharmacists Association (OPA).

"Julia Jennings is an excellent example of the positive impact that pharmacy technicians can make on patient care and on the pharmacy team," said OPA CEO Dennis Darby when announcing the award, which was presented at the Association's annual conference in June.

Jennings, who has worked at Elora Apothecary Pharmasave for the past two years, cites "the ability to multi-task, work in a team environment, pay attention to detail, provide outstanding patient care, and not just identify problems, but also offer solutions" as the skills needed to succeed in her role.

After getting a taste of community pharmacy those 25 years ago, Jennings was hooked. "I really enjoyed the atmosphere and pace that becoming a pharmacy technician had to offer," she says. "It was filled with challenges, helping and caring for people, and going above and beyond to help every patient."

That led to her completing the pharmacy assistant program at Sheridan College in 1995, and eventually becoming a regulated technician in 2012.

When Bronwyn and Andrew Tolmie, pharmacists and co-owners of Elora Apothecary, asked her to join them in opening a new pharmacy in her home community, Jennings admits that she was nervous given that she'd been with her previous employer for 23 years. "That said, it was presented as an opportunity for me to explore some new opportunities to care for patients in our community." She took it and ran with it.

While Jennings is responsible for the technical aspects of prescriptions, as well as purchasing for and maintaining the front store, she has indeed gone "above and beyond" to help more patients by broadening her skill set. She is a certified compression therapy fitter and a weight loss management coach. She also



Photo: Cora Van Zutphen

orders and suggests home healthcare products. "Professionals with expertise in this area are needed in rural communities, and I hope to be able to grow my skills and knowledge in this area of care," she says.

Jennings continues to take courses and seminars offered by professional associations and Pharmasave to better meet the evolving needs of her community, all while raising three children (now 14, 12 and 10), with her husband, Paul. She also volunteers for many local events and causes.

While Jennings was flattered and honoured to be nominated by the Tolmies for the award, the most important thing to her is "being part of a team that is always there for one another, and that is there to help others. I believe that knowing you're helping others is one of the prime components that I enjoy about being a pharmacy technician," she says. "It's more than just filling prescriptions! The community pharmacy plays an important role in health care, especially in rural communities, and I know that by being a pharmacy technician, there is always room to grow and learn new things."

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CPBC reminds pharmacies to protect patient privacy

COMPLIANCE OFFICERS IN THE COLLEGE

of Pharmacists of British Columbia's Practice Review Program noted the following examples of non-compliance related to confidentiality of patient information at some community pharmacies.

1. **Pharmacy pick-up counter:** Patient health information (on a prescription) is visible to the public from outside of the pharmacy. In addition, the filled prescriptions are stored in clear bags/bundles and, despite being stored behind the pharmacy counter, are visible to the public.

2. **Dispensary area:** Registrants would regularly have conversations about a patient and/or prescription within the dispensary that could be heard by the public. Registrants would also continue conversations at the drop-off and pick-up counter.

3. **Receipts and mini-medication profile:** A pharmacy provides all patients with receipts with a mini-medication history and profile. While this practice may be helpful, say compliance officers, it is important to consider whether the mini-medication profile is being provided directly to the patient or to the patient's representative. If the latter, has the patient given consent for the pharmacy to provide such information? A registrant may disclose that information only if the patient has consented to the disclosure.

"In pharmacy practice, pharmacists and pharmacy technicians provide vital services to the public on a daily basis, and need to ensure that they protect confidential patient information at all times," state the compliance officers.

Pilot uses clinical support techs for chemo order entry

GIVEN PHARMACY TECHNICIANS'

expanded scope of practice, often in partnership with pharmacists, a pilot study set out to compare the time spent before and after training a clinical support pharmacy technician (CSPT) to perform chemotherapy order entry in an outpatient medical day unit. A secondary objective was to assess medication errors.

According to the abstract in the June 2016 issue of *The Canadian Journal of Hospital Pharmacy*, the study took place in two phases: in the first, order entry was performed by pharmacists, and in the second, by pharmacy technicians. In both phases, pharmacists performed order-entry checking.

The mean total time to perform order entry was greater during phase 1 (1:37 versus 1:20

minutes). Three errors were observed during order entry in phase 1, and one error in phase 2 (errors were rated as having no effect on patient care).

The study concluded that chemotherapy order entry by a trained CSPT appeared to be just as safe and efficient as order entry by a pharmacist. "Changes in pharmacy technicians' scope of practice could increase the amount of time available for pharmacists to provide direct patient care in the oncology setting," notes the study.

REFERENCE

Neville, Heather et al. Chemotherapy Order Entry by a Clinical Support Pharmacy Technician in an Outpatient Medical Day Unit. *The Canadian Journal of Hospital Pharmacy*, [S.I.], v. 69, n. 3, June 2016. Accessed: 08 Aug. 2016. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.4212/cjhp.v69i3.1556>.

OCP releases module on new Code of Ethics

THE ONTARIO COLLEGE OF

Pharmacists (OCP) has released the first in a series of modules designed to help pharmacy techs and pharmacists understand and apply the new Code of Ethics in their everyday practice. The introductory module is about 20 minutes long, and features a variety of learning techniques, including true and false questions, whiteboard video and case studies that illustrate the Code in practice.

Council approved the new Code at its December 2015 meeting. At the same time, it established a requirement for all pharmacy technicians and pharmacists to declare in 2017 that they have read and understood the Code. The OCP will release additional e-learning and video modules, covering all aspects of the Code, over the coming months.

To view the new module, visit http://www.ocpinfo.com/extra/CoE_1/story.html.



KNOW AN AMAZING PHARMACY TECH?

The 23rd annual Commitment to Care & Service Awards is open for entries. Nominate a deserving retail or hospital pharmacy tech who has shown exemplary dedication to assisting staff to improve pharmacy workflow and better serve patients. Or consider entering yourself for the Pharmacy Technician category. Deadline is October 2, 2016.

For more information go to www.canadianhealthcarenetwork.ca/commitmenttocare

Support program for Ontario pharmacy techs

ONTARIO PHARMACY TECHS WHO MAY be suffering from mental health or addiction problems, or who are worried about a family member, can contact the Ontario Pharmacy Support Program (OPSP).

The confidential service's free referral line offers brief advice and support for those with

mental-health and substance-abuse concerns. Call toll-free: 1-800-463-2338, ext. 77790; or 416-535-8501, ext. 77790.

OPSP is funded in partnership with the Ontario College of Pharmacists and the Ontario Pharmacy Association.

Alberta partners produce scope of practice video

THE PHARMACY TECHNICIAN SOCIETY of Alberta, the Alberta College of Pharmacists, and RxA (Alberta Pharmacists' Association) have partnered to develop a quick-reference

poster outlining the scope of practice for Alberta pharmacy technicians. A printable pdf of the poster is available at <https://pharmacists.ab.ca/sites/default/files/PharmTech-Scope-Poster.pdf>.

ARE PHYSICIANS AND PATIENTS ASKING ABOUT GENERIC DRUGS?

We've introduced a new, informative website to answer their questions about safety and efficacy. Visit TevaMakesMedicines.ca.

Helping patients quit the habit



SMOKING IS THE NUMBER ONE CAUSE of preventable disease and death in Canada. Nearly seven million Canadians smoke, and an estimated 45,000 of them die every year of tobacco-related diseases, according to the Canadian Pharmacists Association (CPhA). The economic burden is also high; smoking-related diseases cost Canada an estimated \$3 billion per year in direct healthcare expenses. Quitting is the single most effective thing that smokers can do to enhance the quality and length of their lives.

And that's where pharmacies can help. Across Canada, provinces are enhancing pharmacists' scope of practice to include prescribing smoking-cessation medications, offering reimbursement for professional services, and even providing free smoking-cessation products to patients, says CPhA. The Association is encouraging more pharmacies to get into the act, offering a self-directed CE certificate program called QUIT, an acronym for Quit Using and Inhaling Tobacco.

In those pharmacies that already offer a smoking-cessation program, pharmacy technicians and assistants have important roles to play. "I think the biggest opportunity that technicians provide is identifying prospective patients who are interested in quitting," says John Papastergiou, owner of two Shoppers Drug Mart pharmacies in Toronto. "They're the ones

taking in the prescriptions, and they're gathering information at that point." He instructs assistants and technicians always to ask patients if they smoke. "Simply by asking if a patient smokes, it doubles quit rates," he says.

Technicians and assistants are also instrumental in explaining how the smoking-cessation program works, says Papastergiou. "They have to have a good understanding of that, and make sure they're able to verbalize to the patient what is required."

SMOKE-FREE RESOURCES

- **Canadian Council on Continuing Education in Pharmacy: Implementing Smoking Cessation Services in the Pharmacy**
www.cccep.ca/show_prov_program.php?provider_prog_id=1672&ac=0
- **Government of Canada: Smoking and Tobacco**
healthycanadians.gc.ca/healthy-living-vie-saine/tobacco-tabac/index-eng.php
- **Health Canada: Tobacco Control Strategy, Tobacco Use Statistics, Quit Now, Reports and Publications**
www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hc-ps/tobac-tabac/index-eng.php
- **Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care: Pharmacy Smoking Cessation Program**
www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/drugs/smoking/factsheet.aspx

Documentation is another way in which technicians and assistants can contribute—filling out the demographic information on the forms with patients. "[Technicians] do a lot of that work before the pharmacist actually sits down with the patient and completes the consult," notes Papastergiou. After the initial consultation, follow-ups are critical to the success of the program. "The real value of smoking-cessation programs comes with the primary and secondary follow-ups," he says. "Having a tech in charge of that program and making sure those follow-up calls get done is very, very important." Follow-up consultations with the pharmacist may take place by telephone, in person, or even electronically, but technicians and assistants can perform a service by initiating the contact.

Finally, the technician or assistant is responsible for billing. Since 2011, the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, for example, has provided remunerated counselling services to Ontario Drug Benefit patients through the Pharmacy Smoking Cessation Program.

"Techs in this role are becoming much more important, not just for smoking cessation but for all expanded-scope activities, because they are the frontline face of the pharmacy," says Papastergiou. "If the pharmacy wants to excel in clinical services, it's going to have to engage a technician."



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