

TECHtalk

NOVEMBER 2022

TECH THRIVES IN COMPOUNDING CAREER

BY THE NUMBERS

NATIONAL SNAPSHOT: TOP 10 MEDICATIONS CAUSING HARM (2016-2021)

1. Methadone (a significant number of errors related to methadone involve giving the drug to the wrong patient)
2. Levothyroxine (patient harm can occur when the dosage units of levothyroxine are mixed up or misinterpreted)
3. Warfarin (its complex dosing regimen can increase the risk of error and harm)
4. Furosemide
5. Sertraline
6. Hydrochlorothiazide
7. Citalopram
8. Metformin (the need for frequent metformin dose adjustments and regimen changes can lead to error and harm)
9. Hydromorphone (harm can occur when long- and short-acting formulations of hydromorphone are inadvertently interchanged)
10. Candesartan

Source: ISMP Canada National Incident Data Repository for Community Pharmacies, July 2022

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IT WAS AN AD ON THE RADIO IN HER

small Alberta hometown that eventually led Jennifer Tuck to the job she loves as lab supervisor at Integrum Compounding Centre. She had always been interested in pharmacy but was unaware of the career possibilities within the profession.

She enrolled in the two-year program at Norquest College in 2006, and later took the bridging program at Bow Valley College to be among the first wave of registered pharmacy technicians in the province in March 2012.

Tuck fell in love with compounding as soon as she was introduced to it in school. “The endless possibilities to create unique solutions for patients had me hooked!” Although there was little call for compounding at the small pharmacy in rural Alberta where she worked initially, “whenever there was an opportunity to mix something up, I jumped at it.”

A year later, she moved to a busy pharmacy in Edmonton, where she was introduced to all types of compounding, “from sterile to non-sterile and everything in between,” she recalls. “It was very fast-paced, with a steep learning curve, but I thrived at the challenge.”

Eventually, she joined Cambrian Pharmacy in Calgary, where she brought her compounding knowledge and experience to help grow the business. But with the adoption of the NAPRA Model Compounding Competencies, “it was either upgrade the lab or take a step back from compounding because we weren’t able to meet the requirements in our current facility,” she explains. “That’s when we decided to build a new state-of-the-art lab and continue to be one of the key compounding providers in Alberta under our new name, Integrum Compounding Centre.”

As supervisor of the one-year-old lab, Tuck is responsible for everything from quality assurance, policies and procedures, final product checking and formulation creation, to managing the staff of six compounders, and liaising with healthcare and pharmacy professionals to assist their patients with compounding solutions.



Last year, she also joined Alberta College of Pharmacy (ACP) as a sterile compounding assessor. In this capacity, she ensures a pharmacy is meeting NAPRA standards for sterile compounding, including policies and procedures, equipment, facilities, personnel and quality assurance. “I’m there to help out to improve their processes and make sure they’re working to the best of their abilities.”

While juggling two jobs and raising two young boys is challenging, Tuck is grateful for the support from both her “work family” and her husband. “I really love what I do, which I think helps me prioritize my work and life balance and make the best of both worlds.”

Tuck gives back by serving as a preceptor to pharmacy technician students, one of whom earned the highest mark on his PEBC exam. “It’s so rewarding when you can help these young techs learn and pass on your knowledge and information,” she says.

Her contributions to the profession have not gone unrecognized; in 2021, she received the Professionalism Award from the Pharmacy Technician Society of Alberta (PTSA).

Going forward, Tuck is keen for pharmacy technicians to grow their scope of practice in Alberta, specifically with injection administration and managing narcotics and controlled substances. “I think pharmacy technicians are more than capable to tackle these responsibilities,

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TECH talk

Publisher:
Donna Kerry

Editor:
Rosalind Stefanac

Writer:
Sally Praskey

Art Director:
Lima Kim

Production Manager:
Lisette Pronovost

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vwood@ensembleiq.com

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ACP announces 2022 Pharmacy Technician Achievement Award recipient

OLIVIA HALLER IS THE RECIPIENT OF THE ALBERTA COLLEGE OF PHARMACY'S (ACP's) 2022 Pharmacy Technician Achievement Award. Haller earned the highest marks across the province on the Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada's Qualifying Exam. The Award includes a prize of \$1,000.

Haller's first job in high school was as a pharmacy assistant and cashier in a small pharmacy in her hometown of Trochu, AB. After graduating from high school and spending a year abroad, she realized she wanted a career in pharmacy and moved to Calgary to pursue a pharmacy technician diploma at Robertson College.

Now registered and working as a pharmacy technician, she remains committed to continual learning, having recently become certified to fit patients for compression stockings. "I'm always looking for other educational opportunities that will help me in my role," she told ACP.

In the future, she hopes to see opportunities for teaching and leadership. She advises those starting out: "Don't be afraid to ask questions. Be bold and share your thoughts."

SCPP Council mandates time-delayed safes

FOLLOWING THE LEAD OF THE BRITISH COLUMBIA COLLEGE OF PHARMACISTS and the Alberta College of Pharmacists who mandated time-delayed safes in 2015 and 2022, respectively, the Council of the Saskatchewan College of Pharmacy Professionals (SCPP) has decided to do the same as a deterrent in pharmacies in that province. Effective November 30, 2022, all new pharmacies must store opioids and other drugs of misuse in time-delayed safes, while all other pharmacies must do so by November 2023. Signage must be displayed on the external entrance doors for the public to see and at the pharmacy counters.

An environmental scan undertaken by SCPP found that many pharmacies in Saskatchewan already had time-delayed safes and post this publicly on pharmacy doors, leaving those pharmacies that do not at greater risk. Statistics show that robberies are reduced by up to 50 to 80 per cent when time-delayed safes and associated signage are used.

A recent rise in pharmacy robberies across Ontario is prompting the Ontario College of Pharmacists to monitor the feasibility of implementing the measure in that province as well as part of its Pharmacy Safety Initiative, a collaboration between the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, the College and other stakeholders to develop short- and long-term strategies aimed at enhancing community safety and preventing crime.

Compounded products must be limited in quantity

THE ALBERTA COLLEGE OF PHARMACY (ACP) reminds registrants that compounding must occur pursuant to a prescription and not for stock management purposes. In accordance with Health Canada's policy, batches of compounded products must be prepared only in very limited quantities in anticipation of future prescriptions, as compounding is to be performed to serve individual patients.

Compounding must be distinct from manufacturing. In Canada, compounding of drugs is practised primarily by pharmacists as an integral part of their profession and is regulated by the respective regulatory authorities in each province/territory. Drug manufacturing, on the other hand, is regulated by Health Canada under the federal Food and Drugs Act and Food and Drug Regulations.

All pharmacists and pharmacy technicians must adhere to Health Canada's Policy on Manufacturing and Compounding Drug Products in Canada (<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/compliance-enforcement/good-manufacturing-practices/guidance-documents/policy-manufacturing-compounding-drug-products.html>).

See "General Guideline on Compounding and Manufacturing Activities" at the above link for a series of questions to distinguish compounding from manufacturing, including the requirement for a demonstrated patient-healthcare professional relationship for compounding.

Tech joins CCCEP board

EFFECTIVE SEPTEMBER 27, pharmacy technician Lois Battcock has joined the board of directors of the Canadian Council on Continuing Education in Pharmacy (CCCEP) as the representative for the Canadian Pharmacy Technician Educators Association.

Battcock is currently the director of operations (covering Newfoundland and Labrador and a portion of Nova Scotia) for a pharmacy chain, and an instructor for a pharmacy technician training program at a private college in St. John's, NL, where she once served as program coordinator. She is also director of administration for the Canadian Association of Pharmacy Technicians (CAPT).

"I am excited to join the board of directors of CCCEP," she said upon her appointment. "I look forward to bringing my background and experience to the table, as well as learning from the other professionals that are part of this board."

Battcock replaces Asfiya Rahman, who had served on the board since 2019.

CSHP webinar helps techs pursue leadership roles

PHARMACY TECHNICIAN ANNIK MACLEOD recently spoke at a Canadian Society of Hospital Pharmacists webinar on "The Emerging Role of Pharmacy Technicians in Leadership." The webinar was designed to help participants:

- Outline a path to becoming a pharmacy operations manager, and the benefits and challenges of the role
- Describe how a pharmacy technician can develop leadership skills
- Identify opportunities to participate in leadership activities
- Understand why pharmacy technicians make great leaders and managers in pharmacy.

MacLeod, who has been a pharmacy technician since 1998 and became registered in 2012, was the first pharmacy technician hired at Ontario's Glengarry Memorial Hospital, where she is currently the pharmacy operations manager. In this capacity, she oversees four employees and works alongside remote telepharmacists to provide quality patient care.

OCP provides practice tool to promote safe opioid dispensing

NOTING THAT PHARMACY TECHNICIANS and pharmacists have an important role to play in safe opioid dispensing and appropriate access to controlled substances, the Ontario College of Pharmacists (OCP) has created "Opioids and Opioid Use Disorder Practice Tool."

"Opioids can be effective medications; however, opioid use and misuse is prevalent in Ontario, resulting in a serious opioid crisis with growing numbers of opioid-related deaths," says OCP.

The Tool shares information to support pharmacy professionals in their delivery of safe, quality pharmacy care, including opioid agonist treatment and safe opioid dispensing. It features a Fact Sheet on Key Requirements for Methadone Dispensing; Guidance for Pharmacy Professionals who are Dispensing or Selling Naloxone; a list of Helpful Resources for Patients; and a series of links to relevant articles and external resources.

To view the Tool, visit <https://bit.ly/3AxwsBe>.

Highlighting the benefits of pharmacy technician preceptors

"WHEN PHARMACY TECHNICIAN STUDENTS are gaining experience in a practice site or provisional pharmacy technicians are completing their Structured Practical Training (SPT), having a pharmacy technician as a preceptor often creates a more meaningful experience," says an article from the Alberta College of Pharmacists. After all, students are being taught and mentored by those who are working in the profession to which they aspire.

The article highlights three groups of pharmacy technician preceptors and preceptees about their experiences: Emily Osinowski and Melanie Vogel, Edmonton; Nina Dueck and Acacia Lovely, Calgary; and Lauren Gray and Danielle Koenen, Lethbridge.

To read the article, visit "We know our roles best" | Alberta College of Pharmacy (abpharmacy.ca).

>> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

which would help relieve some of the pharmacist responsibilities so they can focus more on their clinical roles."

Having found her niche, Tuck encourages new techs to do likewise. "Try and experience a little bit of everything," she advises. "Find out what you enjoy most because there are so many places you can go in the pharmacy technician profession. Attend conferences, take online learning, network with other pharmacy technicians. It will not only provide you with different opportunities and grow your professional network, but you will learn and grow as a person and strengthen the profession as a whole as well."

Notes

Helping ease the anguish of IBS

WHILE IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME

(IBS) is not a life-threatening condition, it's a real gut punch for those who suffer from it.

According to the Canadian Digestive Health Foundation, Canada has one of the highest rates of IBS in the world, estimated at 18 per cent, versus 11 per cent globally. More than 70 per cent of sufferers indicate that their symptoms interfere with everyday life and 46 per cent report missing work or school due to IBS. "The symptoms of IBS can affect quality of life profoundly," says Dragana Skokovic-Sunjic, a clinical pharmacist at the Hamilton Family Health Team and leader in knowledge mobilization for probiotics.

IBS is a disorder affecting the intestine that involves problems with motility (movement of digested food through the intestines) and sensitivity (how the brain interprets signals from the intestinal nerves), leading to abdominal pain, changes in bowel patterns, and other symptoms.

While there is no cure for IBS, pharmacy technicians can provide valuable support for sufferers, notes Skokovic-Sunjic. "These patients are frustrated because they feel that nobody takes them seriously. So, if the technician is offering to ask questions, take notes, that can make a world of difference."

Technicians can gather information such as description of symptoms, history of the onset, how often the attacks occur, and whether the patient has been diagnosed with IBS previously, she suggests. They can also ask about any "red flags"—the presence of blood in the stool, or fever or pain that does not get better with the passing stool, any of which would warrant immediate referral to the pharmacist.

In Canada, probiotics are highly ranked as the intervention for this condition, says Skokovic-Sunjic. In the absence of any red flags, techs can help the patient select a probiotic, since these products are over the counter, and "patients will be selecting them regardless of whether they are asking for help. Not all probiotics will be effective for IBS. There are some specific ones, so technicians can definitely point to products that have evidence for IBS, even without making specific recommendations."

Skokovic-Sunjic, who is the author of the *Clinical Guide to Probiotic Products Available in Canada*, recommends technicians access the Guide at probioticchart.ca (see "Resources") to help patients select a product. "They can scroll down to IBS as a condition, get a list of products that have evidence for IBS, and print that page for the patient. If the patient has questions, they can then discuss the details with the pharmacist."

Technicians can also manage patient expectations in terms of results, says

Skokovic-Sunjic, explaining that "most probiotics need to be taken for a minimum of four to six weeks before assessing whether it's working or not. Some of the probiotics provide benefits much faster than others, but we usually suggest six weeks to assess."

She also advises asking about other medications that the patient is taking, and referring those who are on immunosuppressants, have an autoimmune disease or an allergy to dairy, for example, to the pharmacist before recommending any probiotics. "Some of the probiotics that are for IBS do contain dairy products."

While all these suggestions are within technicians' scope of practice, Skokovic-Sunjic recommends discussing with the pharmacist ahead of time the extent to which

the technician can make recommendations re probiotics and at what point the pharmacist should be called into the conversation "just to set up some parameters."

But she emphasizes that technicians do have an important role to play in helping IBS sufferers. "Technicians really are such an integral part, and they are front-facing to the patient. It can definitely make a difference."

IBS resources

The following trusted websites feature information on IBS and probiotics that pharmacy techs can share with patients.

- Alliance for Education on Probiotics (www.aeprobio.com and www.aeprobio.com/education-guides/)
- Canadian Society of Intestinal Research (www.badgut.org)
- Canadian Digestive Health Foundation (www.cdhf.ca)
- Clinical Guide to Probiotic Products Available in Canada 2022 (www.probioticchart.ca)

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