

TECHtalk

APRIL 2018

ACP warns against inducements

THE ALBERTA COLLEGE OF PHARMACISTS (ACP) reminds pharmacy technicians that they are prohibited from entering into any arrangement with a patient where the healthcare professional provides an inducement to the patient that is conditional on the patient obtaining a drug or professional service, according to the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians. The inducement prohibition came into effect September 27, 2017.

An article on ACP's website provides examples of directions that have been provided since the amended Standards and Code of Ethics came into effect. For instance, one pharmacy chain offered points for patients who signed up to receive an e-mail notice from the pharmacy when vaccinations became available there. "The College's view was that this comprised an offer of an inducement on a professional service or was a strategy designed to skirt the prohibition on inducements," said the article. Consequently, the pharmacy chain stopped the program. "The College does not object to programs where patients sign up for reminders in relation to drugs and professional services, as long as there are no inducements associated with the programs," it concluded.

The inducement prohibition applies to any healthcare product/aid/device, over-the-counter medication, or schedule 3 drug "when the professional services of a pharmacist or pharmacy technician are required."

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Tech follows diverse career path

IN A CAREER SPANNING 40-PLUS YEARS, pharmacy technician Catherine Schuster has worked in retail, hospital and educational settings, and continues to expand her horizons.

Currently, she is coordinator, pharmacy technician programs accreditation, at the Canadian Council for Accreditation of Pharmacy Programs (CCAPP), a position she has held since 2014. In this capacity, she liaises with the coordinators of the pharmacy technician programs at accredited colleges across Canada, which now number 40. "I review the self-studies prior to a site visit, chair the visit, and do the follow-up evaluation report," she explains. "I work closely with the survey team, which includes the CCAPP executive director, a coordinator from another province, a representative from the provincial regulatory body, and most often a member of the board of directors. I report to the Accreditation Committee for Pharmacy Technician Programs and to the board."

Schuster's experience as coordinator of the pharmacy technician program at Lambton College in Sarnia, Ont., from 2006 to 2014, helped prepare her for the CCAPP position, as she was often invited to join the survey team for site visits to other colleges.

It's a job from which she derives great satisfaction, especially in seeing large numbers of pharmacy technician graduates complete their Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada (PEBC) Qualifying Exams. She also cites the Best Practice day that CCAPP sponsors every year at the Canadian Pharmacy Technician Educators Association (CPTEA) annual conference as one of the great rewards of her position. "CCAPP facilitates the day's activities, inviting coordinators and faculty to present innovative ideas for activities in the classroom; the possibilities are endless," she says.

Although Schuster has accomplished much in her distinguished career, it has not been without a great deal of hard work. Since graduating in 1974 as a pharmacy assistant from St. Clair College in Windsor, Ont., she has served on many pharmacy committees and boards—including being elected to president of the PEBC in 2015—all with the goal of working



to gain recognition for the profession and move it forward. "There are many of us who have worked together to do this," she is quick to point out.

Among the first to register with the Ontario College of Pharmacists in 2010, Schuster advises all pharmacy techs to advocate for themselves as healthcare professionals. This is something that they have found difficult, she says, and that has caused the profession to move more slowly, particularly in community pharmacy. "Become a member of CAPT [Canadian Association of Pharmacy Technicians], stay informed, join committees in the workplace, attend educational and professional development sessions and celebrate your accomplishments," she urges. "You need to have a passion for what you do, accept each and every challenge, and take advantage of every opportunity that presents itself."

A lifelong learner herself, Schuster keeps abreast of developments in the fields of pharmacy and pharmacy education. Three years ago, she became involved in the annual Global Pharmacy Technician Symposium, and has chaired sessions and made presentations each year. Next year's conference is in Glasgow, and she invites Canadian pharmacy technicians to attend. "Technicians in Canada have so much to learn and to share," she says. "The roles and responsibilities of technicians in other countries are so varied. I have networked with so many who are working to move the profession

>> CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

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Saskatchewan adopts mandatory reporting of drug dispensing errors

SASKATCHEWAN RECENTLY BECAME the second province, after Nova Scotia, to implement a mandatory program to provide greater medication safety practices in community pharmacies.

The Community Pharmacy Professionals Advancing Safety in Saskatchewan (COMPASS) program is a standardized continuous quality improvement (CQI) program specific to Saskatchewan community pharmacies. It includes safety-related tools for anonymous reporting of medication incidents, review of pharmacy processes and documentation of improvement plan development and monitoring. Pharmacies contribute to a national database called Community Pharmacy Incident Reporting (CPhIR).

The Ontario College of Pharmacists (OCP) is also working towards mandatory reporting of

medication errors to an independent third party. The College recently selected Pharmapod Ltd. to implement a medication error-reporting system and standardized approach to continuous quality assurance in community pharmacies throughout the province. The College planned to have 100 pharmacies signed up to the new reporting program by the end of 2017, and full implementation among the province's more than 4,000 community pharmacies by the end of 2018.

Pharmapod will also be responsible for providing training and CQI processes and tools for Ontario pharmacies, analyzing provincial medication incident data, and making available reports to individual pharmacies. The Canadian Pharmacists Association is partnering with Pharmapod Canada on this initiative.

U.S. board initiates compounding certification for pharmacy technicians

THE U.S.-BASED PHARMACY TECHNICIAN Certification Board (PTCB) has launched a Certified Compounded Sterile Preparation Technician (CSPT) program as a key step in fulfilling its mission to advance medication safety.

"The CPST Program will be the first new certification program PTCB has launched since its inception more than 20 years ago," says PTCB executive director and CEO Everett McAllister. "It is the culmination of a long-term initiative to develop a program for PTCB-Certified Pharmacy Technicians (CPhTs) who perform pharmaceutical sterile compounding."

To apply, a technician must be a PTCB CPhT in good standing and have completed a PTCB-recognized sterile compounding training program plus one year of continuous full-time compounded sterile preparation work experience; or three years of continuous full-time compounded sterile preparation

work experience. To become CSPT Certified, they are required to pass the CSPT exam (a two-hour, 75-question exam) and undergo a Competency Attestation by a qualified supervisor. CSPTs must recertify annually to maintain the credential.

Canada does not have an equivalent certification program, but Professional Compounding Centers of America (PCCA) offers a variety of courses in compounding in Canada. There are also compounding courses offered through the Canadian Council on Continuing Education in Pharmacy (CCCEP), including an independent study course targeted at pharmacy technicians, titled Compounding of non-hazardous and hazardous sterile preparations (According to National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities Model Standards for Pharmacy Compounding of Sterile Preparations).

OCP developing assessment standards for pharmacy techs

THE ONTARIO COLLEGE OF Pharmacists (OCP) is in the process of developing assessment standards for pharmacy technicians practising in the community. A pilot program is set to start in late spring.

Assessment standards are already in place for community pharmacists, with more than 6,000 assessments having already taken place.

Standards for pharmacists practising in hospital and other healthcare settings will follow.

Currently, practice advisors look at how pharmacists handle four areas: patient assessment, decision-making, documentation and communication/education. These standards will be adapted to reflect the role of pharmacy technicians.

2018 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

APRIL 13-15

2018 Pharmacists Manitoba Conference
RBC Convention Centre, Winnipeg
CONTACT: Manitoba Society of Pharmacists,
www.pharmacistsmb.ca/conference/home.html

APRIL 18-21

8th International Research Conference on
Adolescents and Adults with Fetal Alcohol
Spectrum Disorders
The Hyatt Regency, Vancouver, B.C.
CONTACT: <http://interprofessional.ubc.ca/initiatives/adults2018/>

MAY 3-6

CAPhO Conference 2018
Hilton Lac-Leamy, Ottawa-Gatineau, Que.
CONTACT: Canadian Association of Pharmacy
in Oncology, www.capho.org/capho-conference-2018

MAY 4-6

PDC 2018, CAPT Professional Development
Conference
The Westin Resort and Spa, Whistler, B.C.
CONTACT: Canadian Association of Pharmacy
Technicians, www.capt.ca

MAY 11-13

PAS 2018 Annual Conference
Doubletree by Hilton Hotel, Regina
CONTACT: Pharmacy Association of
Saskatchewan,
www.skpharmacists.ca/pharmacists/professional-development/pas-annual-conference

MAY 12

NLPB Symposium
Comfort Inn Airport Hotel, St. John's, NL
CONTACT: Newfoundland and Labrador
Pharmacy Board, www.nlpb.ca

MAY 24-26

Annual Conference of British Columbia
Pharmacy Association
Fairmont Empress Hotel, Victoria, B.C.
CONTACT: <https://www.bcparmacy.ca/events/bcpa-annual-conference-2018>

JUNE 1-2

New Brunswick Pharmacy Conference
Fredericton, N.B. (in conjunction with the
Canadian Pharmacists Conference)
CONTACT: New Brunswick Pharmacists'
Association, www.nbpharma.ca

JUNE 2-5

Canadian Pharmacists Conference 2018
Fredericton, N.B.
CONTACT: www.pharmacists.ca/news-events/

JUNE 5-7

Ontario Pharmacists Association Annual
Conference
Deerhurst Resort, Huntsville, Ont.
CONTACT: <https://www.opatoday.com/professional/events/conference2018>

JUNE 22-23

Annual Newfoundland and Labrador Pharmacy
Technician Conference
The Hampton Inn & Suites, St. John's, NL
CONTACT: lbattcock@capt.ca

SEPTEMBER 14-15

28th Annual Alberta Pharmacy Technician
Conference
Carriage House Inn, Calgary
CONTACT: Pharmacy Technician Society of
Alberta (PTSA), <https://ptsa.ca/28th-annual-alberta-pharmacy-technician-conference/>

OCTOBER 19-21

Nova Scotia Pharmacy Conference 2018
Holiday Inn, Truro, N.S.
CONTACT: Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia,
www.pans.ns.ca (includes technician track)

OCTOBER 26-27

13th Annual Conference of Pharmacy
Technician Society of British Columbia (PTSBC)
River Rock Casino Resort, Richmond, B.C.
CONTACT: www.ptsbc.ca

OCTOBER 26-27

Annual Conference of PTSSK
Regina, Sask.
CONTACT: Pharmacy Technician Society of
Saskatchewan, www.ptssk.ca

Special track for techs at PANS conference

PHARMACY TECHNICIANS HAD THE opportunity to attend a series of sessions designed especially for them at the 2017 conference of the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia (PANS).

On the Saturday afternoon of the three-day event in October, some 15 pharmacy technicians heard sessions on the role of the pharmacy in community mental health, the technician's role in opioid dependence treatment, and their role in asthma and COPD management. The program also included a panel session on mental health and addictions.

"The feedback from those who attended was excellent," says Amy Wagg, PANS director of communications. As a result, PANS intends to have technician-specific sessions at its 2018 conference as well (see Calendar of Events). "We have already had our first committee meeting for 2018, and we have technicians represented on our committee," says Wagg.

Notes

>> TECH PROFILE continued from page 1

forward in their respective countries and within their own pharmacy technician professional organizations."

Even now, Schuster's enthusiasm for the profession is stronger than ever. Whether in her current position or in a future consulting role, she wants to "continue working with educators to build and enhance their programs." As demand for pharmacy technicians increases, "this is an exciting time for the profession," she says. "There are so many great technicians working in many different fields of practice."

A healthy immunization system

WITH PHARMACISTS IN MOST PROVINCES

now able to administer vaccines, pharmacy technicians and assistants play an increasingly important role in the immunization process.

In a nutshell, vaccines introduce a very small amount of a substance, such as a killed or weakened bacteria or virus, into the body. In response, the body builds up bacteria- or virus-fighting antibodies against the specific bacteria or virus, and the person receiving the vaccine will be immune to that infection.

Over the past 50 years, immunization has saved more lives in Canada than any other health intervention. The World Health Organization estimates that every year, more than two million deaths are prevented worldwide due to immunization. Infants and young children are particularly susceptible to vaccine-preventable diseases because their immune systems are less mature and therefore less able to fight infection; as a result, they require timely immunization. Older children and adults also need to be immunized, to restore waning immunity and to build new immunity against diseases. And, given the population they are serving, so do members of the pharmacy team.

Immunization protects both individuals who receive the vaccine and the people with whom they come in contact, especially those who cannot be vaccinated or are incompletely vaccinated due to medical conditions or age. Immunization against many diseases also prevents the spread of infection in the community and indirectly protects:

- newborns who have not yet received all of their vaccines;
- people who cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons, such as people who have had an organ transplant or are undergoing treatment for cancer or other illnesses;
- people who may not adequately respond to immunization, such as the elderly.

TIPS TO AVOID ERRORS

- Avoid use of abbreviations for vaccine names, and clarify prescriptions that have abbreviations for vaccines.
- Store vaccines with similar names, such as Tdap and DTap, separately.
- Stay alert for vaccines with similar packaging, and use strategies to prevent mishaps, such as separate storage and shelf tags.
- Double check if a vaccine comes with a diluent, and if so, be sure to dispense the vaccine and the diluent.
- Be familiar with which vaccines must be frozen or refrigerated, and follow storage instructions closely.

Source: Technician Tutorial, "The Basics of Immunization and Vaccines." Pharmacist's Letter/Pharmacy Technician's Letter, June 2017.

How to help

There are a variety of ways in which technicians and assistants can help pharmacists with immunization. They can identify patients who would benefit from vaccines. "This can include screening patients while in the pharmacy or while filling prescriptions, as well as assisting in marketing initiatives like bag stuffers or posting to social media," says Sean Simpson, pharmacist at Simpson's Pharmasave in Niagara-on-the-Lake and Virgil, Ont. "Scheduling appointments and facilitating is also critical."

Another important duty is ordering vaccines, and maintaining supplies of syringes, sharps containers, alcohol swabs, Band-Aids and gloves.

Tracking is also vital. "Certain multi-dose vaccines have an expiry from first use, so a

tracking system of when a multi-dose vial is first used is important," notes Simpson. Appropriate management of vaccines that require multiple injections may include auto-refilling and reminding patients of additional doses. "Proper inventory control procedures are important, given these extra requirements."

Other responsibilities include billing for vaccinations, keeping an accurate temperature log, and ensuring that patients have the tools to keep track of their vaccinations properly, using immunization cards, apps or other electronic means, Simpson suggests. With proper training and supervision, he adds, technicians can draw up injections and prepare needles for the pharmacist as well.

RESOURCES

- **Health Canada:** <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/canadian-immunization-guide-part-1-key-immunization-information.html>
- **Immunization and Vaccines (Government of Canada):** <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/topics/immunization-vaccines.html>
- **Immunize Canada:** www.immunize.ca



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