

# TECHtalk

MAY 2015

## BY THE NUMBERS

### REGULATED PHARMACY TECHNICIANS\*

Alberta .....	457
British Columbia .....	915
Manitoba.....	0
New Brunswick .....	1
Newfoundland and Labrador .....	0
Nova Scotia .....	44
Ontario.....	2,927
Prince Edward Island.....	5
Quebec.....	0
Saskatchewan .....	0
<b>Canada.....</b>	<b>4,349</b>

\*As of January 1, 2015  
Source: National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities (NAPRA)

## ACCREDITED CE LESSON INCLUDED:

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## TECH FINDS CALLING IN TEACHING

### PHARMACY TECHNICIAN BARBARA

Nicholson discovered quite by accident that she has a passion for teaching.

In 2010, she was surfing the Internet for study material to assist in her upcoming Prior Learning and Assessment Recognition (PLAR) exams when she stumbled upon an advertisement for a casual teaching position at Calgary's Robertson College. "I thought this might be a good opportunity to get paid while I was learning and studying," she says. She got the job, and a few months later, was offered a regular position teaching the "History, Law and Ethics" course.

"I found out that I loved preparing the curriculum and updating the material," she says. At that time, she was still working four days a week at Rockyview Hospital as well. "After a year or two of doing that, I realized my real passion was the teaching, so I dropped some of my hours at the hospital to be able to work more hours at the college."

In 2013, she became program coordinator for the college, responsible for program delivery, hiring and scheduling instructors, monitoring students, coordinating practicums, and, what she describes as her greatest challenge, the budgeting and administrative duties that come with working at a private college. In addition, she still teaches some courses, and continues to work a few days a week at the hospital. "I want all my instructors working other jobs, so I wouldn't ask them to do it and not do it myself," she says. "It keeps me current with what's going on, especially now that pharmacy technicians are increasing their scope of practice."

Nicholson became regulated in 2012. Having worked as a pharmacy technician since graduating from St. Clair College in Windsor, Ont., in 1984, she admits she was somewhat apprehensive about the prospect of regulation at first. "It was a long and costly process, with no promises of more money or any changes in our duties," she says. "However, I've seen changes in the hospitals, with technicians now doing the best possible medication histories for patients. I know of some technicians who are working full scope



of practice in retail pharmacies, and this enables those pharmacists to spend more time counselling patients, which results in better patient care. I tell my students that regulated technicians are new to the industry, and they need to show the managers, pharmacists and store owners what regulated technicians can do to improve patient care."

Besides mentoring her own students, Nicholson plays an active role in the regulation of all pharmacy technicians in the province: she helps candidates prepare for the Objective Structured Performance Exam (OSPE), serves on the education committee of the Pharmacy Technician Society of Alberta (PTSA), and presents at conferences and seminars. Her efforts have not gone unrecognized; her peers honoured her with the 2014 PTSA Professionalism Award for her commitment to lifelong learning and dedication to the profession.

Nicholson considers her greatest accomplishment to date the accreditation in 2013 of the pharmacy technician program at Robertson College by the Canadian Council for Accreditation for Pharmacy Programs (CCAPP), the only private college in Alberta to earn that status. "I had only been in my position for a few months, so I had a lot to learn and do before the panel from CCAP did their on-site visit," she says. "I was fortunate to

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Publisher:  
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For more information, contact Vicki Wood  
Tel: 416-764-3923 vicki.wood@rci.rogers.com

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### SCP publishes special newsletter on regulation

**IN MARCH, IN PREPARATION FOR** regulation in Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan College of Pharmacists (SCP) published a special edition of its SCOPE Newsletter on the topic of pharmacy technicians.

The 15-page newsletter features information on professional competencies at entry to practice, national bridging program, structured practical training, jurisprudence examination, and other requirements for registration and licensure.

Bill 151, an Act to amend The Pharmacy Act, 1996, was tabled in the Saskatchewan

legislature on October 30, 2014, for first reading. The Bill amends the Act to authorize, among other things, the regulation of pharmacy technicians by the SCP. It is expected to be proclaimed in force around the middle of this year.

During the transitional period, the College is establishing an Expert Advisory Committee to assist it with setting criteria for a conditional practicing licence for pharmacy assistants working towards regulation. This licence will allow these candidates to continue in their current position until December 31, 2018.

### Compliance officers find incorrect drug placement

**AS THE PRACTICE REVIEW PROGRAM** gathers steam in British Columbia, the College of Pharmacists of British Columbia is publishing a new series of articles related to the findings of compliance officers in the Pharmacy Review or the Pharmacy Professionals Review.

Titled "Practice Review Program Insights," the first installment focuses on drug product distribution requirements. Compliance officers have been finding certain nonprescription products placed in incorrect areas of community pharmacies.

The article includes a table identifying the correct drug schedules for non-prescription products that were found to be misplaced during the pharmacy reviews. The list comprises two Schedule II drugs, which must

be kept within the professional service area of the pharmacy where there is no public access, and eight Schedule III drugs, which may be sold to any person from the self-selection professional products area of a licensed pharmacy. (Schedule I drugs require a prescription.)

A pharmacist must be available for consultation with a patient who wishes to select a Schedule III drug.

The document "Drug Product Distribution Requirements for Community Pharmacies" is a resource for staff to identify Schedule II and III products.

Under the Professional Practice Reviews, every pharmacy technician and pharmacist in the province will be reviewed in person at least once every six years.

#### >> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

work with an incredible staff of instructors and administrators to accomplish the accreditation."

In the future, she aims to not only meet the standards set out by CCAPP, but "to exceed them." She also wants to expand the College's pharmacy assistant program. "The pharmacy industry still needs well-trained pharmacy employees, and I'd like to be the education facility that employers will seek out for their staff to work in the dispensary."

No goal is too lofty for this tireless tech-turned-teacher. "I am really glad that I went outside my comfort zone and applied for the casual position as instructor," she enthuses. "I have a real passion for education and helping others."

### Help for Ontario techs seeking extra shifts

**ONTARIO PHARMACY TECHNICIANS** looking to pick up additional work can take advantage of Shift Assist, a self-serve solution for filling relief shifts in the province.

Introduced in February by the Ontario Pharmacists Association (OPA) for its members, Shift Assist matches qualified pharmacy technicians and pharmacists to available relief positions at no additional cost.

Members need only complete a Shift Assist profile at [www.opatoday.com](http://www.opatoday.com), and start browsing and applying for shifts of interest. They can also receive notifications directly to their inbox when a shift that matches their profile is posted.

## Communicating effectively – and professionally

**PHARMACY TECHNICIANS AND ASSISTANTS** in community pharmacies must communicate with many different parties in the course of their daily work: pharmacists, managers, healthcare professionals and providers and, of course, patients.

There are also many methods by which to communicate, be it telephone, face to face, or electronically.

But all these variables mean more possibilities for a message to be misunderstood, which could have serious consequences.

That is where Lisa Dare comes in. Calgary-based Dare is principal of Lisa Dare & Associates, a certified professional coach, management consultant and facilitator, and also a licensed pharmacist. Recently, she conducted a presentation titled “Key Elements of Effective Professional Communication” for members of the Pharmacy Technician Society of Alberta.

After all, with the advent of regulation, it is even more important that technicians communicate in a professional manner and are perceived as professionals.

Going back to the basics, Dare defines communication as “the process of negotiating shared meaning.” The “process” refers to the method of communication, while “negotiating shared meaning” is the idea of transmitting the message in a way that the receiver is able to decode it in the way that the sender intended.

So how can technicians and assistants improve their communication skills?

Dare suggests that they identify a learning plan for themselves. “One of the things that can be helpful in developing this plan is to seek feedback, since we don’t know how we’re coming across to others,” she says. If this is an area that you have decided to focus on, tell your manager and other colleagues, and invite feedback, she urges. If anticipating a difficult conversation, try some role-playing. Dare also videotapes pharmacists who are practicing for their OSPE exam. “It’s a very powerful tool because it’s not subject to any kind of interpretation.”

An important part of effective communication is listening, including detecting nonverbal clues (which can comprise anywhere from 50% to 80% of the message). For example, what is the person’s posture and facial expression? Is there a change in the tone of voice or rate at which he or she is speaking? Perhaps a patient is signalling confusion through body language, which necessitates clarifying your message or asking questions to ensure he or she has understood. Dare says one of the common pitfalls she has observed with technicians and assistants is

not asking enough questions.

It is also helpful to reiterate what you believe the other person has said, to ensure you have received the message correctly.

### “COMMUNICATION IS FUNDAMENTAL TO ESTABLISHING A PROFESSIONAL PROFILE”

“Communication is fundamental to establishing a professional profile,” says Dare. “It’s an ongoing journey. It’s important for technicians and assistants to really think about this

as well because it can lead to so many other things. Our communication – good or bad – creates perception. And those perceptions become reality. How do we want to be seen? In order to be an effective member of the healthcare team and provide optimal patient care, it’s important to have those strong building blocks and foundation of communication because it impacts so many stakeholders in the healthcare system.”

Part of being a professional is taking initiative and identifying opportunities to move the profession forward, says Dare. Effective communication skills promote collaboration with pharmacists, allowing technicians to better demonstrate their capabilities.



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# *How can you improve your pharmacy's injection services?*

As a technician, you are one of your pharmacy's most valuable resources—now, you can even get involved in its immunization program.

Teva Canada's half-day workshop "*The Role of the Pharmacy Technician in the Team Approach to Immunization/Injection*,"\* accredited for 3.0 CEUs, will teach you how you can help your pharmacy's immunization program be more efficient and more effective, from identifying patients who would benefit from injection services to dispelling myths around immunizations.

For more information and a list of upcoming workshops in your area, visit [TevaPharmacySolutions.com/TechImmunization](https://www.TevaPharmacySolutions.com/TechImmunization).

\*Currently available in Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba and Ontario.