

Winter 2010

The Transition Times

HELPING YOU NAVIGATE CHANGE



Making your move...

Evolving competence to keep pace with advances in pharmacy practice

POPQuiz

Dispensing medication is NOT a pharmacist's primary role.

True False

Pharmacists can do much more for you than just dispense medication.

True False

If you said "true" for both, you're right. However, the public, and even many pharmacists, may have answered very differently a few years ago.

These questions were used in the online portion of the ACP/RxA fall 2009 public awareness campaign to help the public understand and value pharmacists. The answer for the first question was (and is): "A pharmacist's primary role is to ensure that you get the most appropriate medication for your condition. This means the pharmacist may ask you questions – even if you have a prescription from another health professional."

alberta college of
pharmacists



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For the second question, readers learned that, “Pharmacists are key members of your healthcare team. They can help you:

- screen for and manage chronic diseases like diabetes, high blood pressure or asthma
- control your weight
- stop smoking
- prevent illness through immunization, vaccination and healthy living advice
- travel safely with travel medicine tips and clinics
- maintain independence through homecare services
- ensure seamless care during and after a hospital stay
- coordinate all your care so you get the most from your efforts.”

We’ve barely scratched the surface of the value you can add to the overall health system and the quality of patient care.

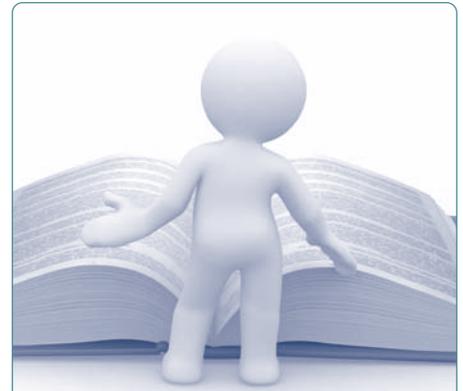
These questions and answers reflect how the changing needs of health professionals, the health system, and patients are changing the way care is provided. And while it’s true that pharmacists should be appreciated now,

we’ve barely scratched the surface of the value you can add to the overall health system and the quality of patient care. The good news is that the climate is right for changing that.

After years of talking about it, the legislation, political will, and public expectations have aligned to create a climate where

pharmaceutical care can actually occur. Pharmacists now truly have the opportunity to practice and be recognized as the drug therapy experts.

There are opportunities for you to advance your practice, enjoy a more satisfying career, and provide more comprehensive, effective patient care.



Pharmaceutical care is defined as...

the functions performed by a pharmacist in ensuring the optimal use of medications to achieve specific outcomes that improve a patient’s quality of life; further, the pharmacist accepts responsibility for outcomes that ensue from his or her actions, which occur in collaboration with patients and other healthcare colleagues.

American Society of Hospital Pharmacists, Statement on Pharmaceutical Care

Moving from counter to counselling area

Although pharmacists have long been associated with dispensing, that was never where they really added value. The technical portions of dispensing can be, and are being, fulfilled by non-pharmacists – centralized and automated dispensaries, kiosks, and soon, regulated technicians. But ensuring appropriate, safe, and effective drug therapy can only be done by a knowledgeable, skilled professional like you.

As with all change though, getting started can be hard. High expectations may translate into high pressure for you. What if you’re not sure you are up for the challenge? What if you don’t know where to start? Don’t panic: plan.





Break down the big picture

Rather than getting overwhelmed by all the changes, set your goals, break down the steps you need to reach them, and get started. By figuring out how you can have the greatest positive impact on your patients, you'll know where to focus your time and energy.

Step 1

Decide what competencies you need to feel confident in a more patient-focused practice. How are your interviewing skills? How comfortable are you working with patients from other cultures? Are you being held back by uncertainty around patient assessment techniques? Does documentation (or lack thereof) drag you down?

Step 2

Develop a learning plan to shore up your competencies (and your confidence). What are your learning objectives? What learning activities can help you meet your objectives? Are there peers and mentors you can learn from? By what date do you want to complete the learning?

Step 3

Put your plan into action. Making even one small step toward your goal means you're making progress and will likely motivate you to do more. There's never going to be a "perfect" time, so why not just start now?

Step 4

Take time to evaluate your progress and your practice. How will you apply your new knowledge? How will your practice and your patients benefit? What do you still need to learn?

Remember, Competence = Confidence.



Make use of the ACP resources

ACP's programs and resources are here to help you provide excellent patient care. Take advantage of them. These include:

- resources such as the *Orientation to Your New Practice Framework*, enabling standards of practice, Code of Ethics, and practice guidelines (under *Pharmacist Resources* on the ACP website);
- continuing professional development through the college's conferences and its partnership with Practice Development at the U of A with courses on anticoagulation, menopause, influenza, and lab values;
- visits, education and feedback from the Pharmacy Practice Consultants (*Note: ACP is hiring a third Pharmacy Practice Consultant and a Professional Practice Administrator to offer you even more practice support*); and
- the RxCEL Competence Program, including the RxCEL CPD Plan (log in to the online CPD Plan through *Registrant profile* login on the ACP website).

Evolving practice = evolving ACP competence tools

ACP's RxCEL Competence Program supports your ongoing professional development with four components:

- self-assessment,
- learning plan,
- learning activities, and
- evaluation.

You can complete all of the elements in the RxCEL Competence Program on your own. While this design allows for flexibility and a very individualized path, you can perpetuate gaps if you are unaware of some of your own deficiencies in knowledge, skill, or ability.

Competence assessment (i.e., having your competence assessed by outside means), gives you a more comprehensive perspective. Having independent confirmation of your competence helps give you confidence to practice to your full scope and provides you with

objective information to understand the limits of your personal competence.

ACP's competence assessment tools are designed to serve two purposes:

1. to provide constructive feedback to you to help you develop your knowledge, skills and abilities; and
2. to provide information to the college about registrants' individual and aggregate competence.

Competence assessment is NOT intended to:

- be punitive, or to
- take pharmacists' licenses away from them.

Competence assessment IS intended to:

- provide the pharmacist with objective feedback about some aspects of their competence,
- complement the pharmacist's self-assessment,
- provide information to help guide the pharmacist's continuing professional development, and

- provide assurance to patients, government, and other health professionals that Alberta pharmacists are competent to perform their authorized roles.

Two new competence tools

Because of the diversity in pharmacists' practice throughout Alberta and because of the evolving and expanding role of pharmacists, assessment of competence must be flexible. Therefore, ACP has developed two new assessment tools that will debut this year: knowledge assessment and review of professional portfolio.

Knowledge Assessment

The knowledge assessment is a three hour computer-based multiple choice assessment of pharmacists' knowledge and problem-solving capabilities. It will provide pharmacists with feedback about their general clinical knowledge. It is an online evaluation of a pharmacist's problem-solving capabilities; it is not a test of the ability to regurgitate facts and figures. The knowledge assessment is designed to assess pharmacists' clinical knowledge in a large number of areas.

In October 2009, 56 Alberta pharmacists wrote a pilot version of the knowledge assessment. After they wrote their assessment, over half the participants said participating in the knowledge assessment will help them improve their competence (i.e., their knowledge, skills and abilities). Eighty percent of the participants said they think writing the knowledge assessment will help them target their continuing professional development.

Other provincial colleges of pharmacy also acknowledge the importance of assessing pharmacists' knowledge. ACP is partnering with the College of

Pharmacists of British Columbia on the knowledge assessment. Partnership opportunities with the Saskatchewan College of Pharmacists and the Ontario College of Pharmacists are also being explored.

ACP's Knowledge Assessment Panel has constructed the blueprint for the assessment based on a topic's relevance, criticality and frequency in practice. The blueprint for the knowledge assessment will be posted in the Continuing Competence section of the ACP website as soon as it is finalized. Even a review of the blueprint may highlight areas you may have been neglecting and so might target in your continuing professional development. For example, if you were asked to prescribe by adapting a prescription for an antihyperglycemic, would you have the necessary knowledge to do so? How do you know you have the necessary knowledge?

Professional Portfolio

The professional portfolio is an alternative to the knowledge assessment. A professional portfolio takes a pharmacist's learning portfolio beyond learning to implementation into practice.

The pharmacist's professional portfolio will include three learning projects together with evidence of how the pharmacist's competence was enhanced and his/her learning was implemented into practice.

The professional portfolio provides you the opportunity to demonstrate that you have used continuing professional development to not only enhance your competence but to improve your pharmacy practice.

The professional portfolio assesses multifaceted competencies, such as the ability to develop and implement a care

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plan and document patient care. Feedback from peer assessors on your professional portfolio may help you improve your learning plans, your care plans, and/or your documentation.

The professional portfolio is currently being piloted with 26 pharmacists.

How do I know which competence assessment tool to use?

Both the knowledge assessment and professional portfolio are options for all clinical pharmacists. The professional portfolio may be the preferred option for pharmacists who work in more

specialized practices, such as anticoagulation clinics or cancer clinics. It may also be the preferred option for pharmacists who do not work in direct patient care.

All pharmacists with additional prescribing authorization must compile a professional portfolio when selected for competence assessment. This will allow them to demonstrate that they are maintaining and enhancing the competencies that first gained them this authorization.

Keep in mind that there is an added "bonus" to the professional portfolio for those who have not yet applied for additional prescribing authorization – at the end of your review, you may have care plans and documentation you can use as the basis for your additional prescribing authorization application!

How will competence assessment audits work?

Once the pilots of the knowledge assessment and professional portfolio are complete and the required revisions approved, ACP will roll out these assessment tools.

Approximately 100 pharmacists will be selected for competence assessment in 2010 and a full 10% of practising pharmacists (approx. 400) will be selected in 2011.

Note that the competence assessments do not replace the requirement of each clinical pharmacist to earn 15 continuing education units (CEUs) per year.

ACP will communicate with all registrants regarding these competence assessment tools so stay tuned for updates as these initiatives move forward.



How do regulated technicians fit into this picture?



New roles for technicians do not mean *no roles* for pharmacists. In fact, it means pharmacists will finally be freed to offer the service unique to the profession: ensuring the most appropriate drug therapy for patients.

Currently, a pharmacist is responsible for signing off each prescription (both new and refills) indicating that the drug therapy is appropriate for the patient, the prescription has been filled accurately and the patient has received appropriate counseling.

Pharmacists will continue to be responsible and accountable for assessing the appropriateness of drug therapy (both for new and refill prescriptions and OTCs) and for providing patient consultation.

Specifically, it will continue to be the pharmacist who must conduct patient assessments, confirm the dosage and interval of the prescription, identify drug interactions and potential drug-related problems, ensure policies and procedures are in place and followed for the processing of the prescription, provide counseling and perform all other clinical and cognitive functions.

Regulated pharmacy technicians will be able to take responsibility for the accuracy of the technical functions related to product preparation and processing, including the final check.

So, while pharmacists must authorize each prescription, they will no longer be obliged to process the prescription.

By becoming regulated health professionals, technicians will be accountable and responsible for their work. While it may take some time to build trust, just as it has taken time for physicians to trust that pharmacists can take on new roles, ultimately this means that pharmacists will not have to spend their new-found time double checking product preparation but can use their unique knowledge to provide medication reviews, more complete patient assessment, and more thorough patient education and follow up, thereby ensuring that patients get the most appropriate, effective and safe drug therapy.

Technician
 Pharmacist
 Prescriber

	Write prescription	Assess appropriateness of prescription	Process prescription	Update patient profile	Prepare product	Complete final check	Counsel patient
Without regulated technicians							
With regulated technicians							

Want to get a jump on assessment and documentation competencies right away?



Register to attend *Chat, check and chart: Patient assessment and documentation demystified*. This is ACP's professional development symposium that will be held at the Calgary Telus Convention Centre on Saturday, May 15.

This event will give you practical tools, tips, and coaching in two areas critical to succeeding in the expanding practice framework: patient assessment and documentation.

Sound assessment and documentation skills are critical to ensuring patient safety. The expanded scope of practice open to you and the opportunities to fully collaborate with other health professionals can only be realized if your patient assessment and documentation is thorough, accurate, and accessible.

Learn first-hand from your peers and other experts who have incorporated change into their practice. Find out how they've improved their practice, what experience has taught them, and how you can transition your practice more easily.

In the symposium, you will:

- Observe "real time" patient assessments and learn how to assess and document efficiently.
- Demystify documentation. Review examples of different systems and receive practical tools to document clearly, accurately and quickly.
- Contemplate new work flows and opportunities that will be possible when regulated technicians take on more of the dispensing functions.
- Work in small groups, participate in panel discussions, and get hands-on experience applying proven techniques.

Information will be applicable to community, hospital, and PCN practice settings.

Register using the enclosed form or go to the ACP homepage (pharmacists.ab.ca) to view the advance program and registration form. Registration is limited, so don't delay.

The early bird registration deadline is April 15.



**Saturday, May 15, 2010
Calgary Telus Convention Centre**

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