

TECHtalk

MARCH 2023

TECH FINDS HIS PERFECT FIT

BY THE NUMBERS

Total incidents reported by community pharmacies in Manitoba: 3,898

- Number of incidents associated with harm: **137 (3.5%)**
- Number of incidents reported to have caused mild harm: **124 (90%)**
- Number of incidents to have caused moderate harm: **11 (8%)**
- Number of incidents to have caused severe harm: **1 (1%)**
- Number of incidents to have caused death: **1 (1%)**

Most error-prone stages of medication-use process

- Dispensing (**99 incidents**)
- Order entry (**79 incidents**)

Most common types of errors

- Incorrect dose or frequency: **33 incidents**
- Incorrect drug: **27 incidents**
- Omitted medication: **19 incidents**

Source: Multi-Incident Analysis of Incidents Associated with Harm Reported by Community Pharmacies in Manitoba, October 2022. (April 1, 2017—March 31, 2022)

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NELSON CHEN READILY ADMITS HE “GETS

bored easily.” And that is what inspired him to become a pharmacy technician. As he explains, he was working as a merchandiser at a Shoppers Drug Mart store in British Columbia, still searching for his ideal job. “Because I was in close proximity with the pharmacy staff there, I noticed how busy they were on a daily basis and just the sheer variety of tasks they were involved in, and every day seemed different,” he recalls.

Encouraged by his sister, who was a community pharmacist, he got hired as a pharmacy assistant in 2006 at a SDM in Coquitlam. “That was the start of my pharmacy experience,” he says. “I learned everything on the job, and I found it really fulfilling to be able to directly help pharmacists, so they could in turn help the patients.”

Over time, Chen became very interested in the rules and regulations around the profession. “I started looking over payer agreements and bylaws. It hinted at a larger pharmacy world outside of the dispensary, and it caused me to keep an eye out for a job posting that would align these interests.”

That opportunity came in 2014, when he landed his current position as coordinator, pharmacy practice support, at B.C. Pharmacy Association (BCPhA). At the time, he was not yet a registered pharmacy technician. “But immediately upon starting this job, I realized how much I did not know about policy and regulation, and how much there was to learn, so I decided to become regulated in order to better understand the profession from the perspective of a registrant.” He enrolled in the bridging program at the University of British Columbia and became regulated by 2015.

Chen’s main responsibility at the advocacy body is answering pharmacist questions. “It’s a B.C. members’ service, so these questions can be all over the place,” he explains. “They can range from policy clarification to payer policy to technical support. It’s kind of similar to being an assistant in a very busy pharmacy where you can be pulled in different directions—



I like that very nature of the role.”

He also facilitates the administration of the injections training course, oversees accreditation for the Association’s e-training courses, and conducts background research for cross-province scans.

While Chen admits that immersing oneself in rules and regulations might not be everyone’s cup of tea, “it is my dream job, in that I get to delve into the regulations on a regular basis! It’s endlessly fascinating to me, learning how all the pieces fit together to form the framework of the rules that govern the profession.”

Achieving work/life balance has proven to be a challenge, however. For the first year in his new position, Chen was also studying for the bridging courses, teaching piano on the weekends, and raising a toddler with his wife Queenie. For his first six years at BCPhA, he continued to work part-time in community pharmacy, “mainly because I felt it was important to continue to get that frontline perspective of what pharmacist members were facing on a day-to-day basis so that I didn’t lose sight of the people I’m supposed to represent and help.”

Since 2017, he has volunteered as communications coordinator for the Pharmacy Technician Society of British Columbia.

“Everybody on the leadership team has a full-

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TECH talk

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Hospital Pharmacy in Canada survey adds data on tech practice

THE RECENTLY RELEASED HOSPITAL PHARMACY IN CANADA SURVEY REPORT 2020/21

includes, for the first time, a chapter on pharmacy technician practice, written by pharmacy technician Bal Dhillon, director, Inventory & Order Management, Provincial Health Services Authority in British Columbia. The survey of pharmacies at large and small hospitals across Canada included several new questions exploring the activities and roles that regulated pharmacy technicians and non-regulated pharmacy assistants are providing in hospital pharmacy services.

The report reveals the growing extent of duties performed by pharmacy technical staff that were previously performed or supervised by pharmacists, and describes how the role of regulated pharmacy technicians and non-regulated pharmacy assistants is evolving.

Dillon notes that this report also represents the first time that tasks performed by regulated pharmacy technicians and non-regulated pharmacy assistants are presented separately. "From this point forward, it will be possible to analyze results for both types of technical staff to determine trends, which will assist in

measuring the impact of regulation on hospital pharmacy practice."

According to the report, there continues to be opportunity to increase the utilization of pharmacy technical staff in such activities as: creating initial inpatient drug therapy documentation and discharge drug therapy plans; collecting laboratory test results to support drug therapy evaluation; calculating changes to parenteral nutrition therapy; and collecting data for drug utilization reviews.

The section focusing on pharmacy technicians concludes that regulation is not enough, and that several factors must be considered to move hospital pharmacy practice forward and ensure the successful integration of regulated pharmacy technicians. For example: addressing shortages of trained professionals and inconsistencies in the education, training and certification requirements; the addition of more accredited pharmacy technician programs in Canada; and further opportunities for appropriate delegation of pharmacist activities.

To access the report, visit [HPCS-2020-21-Report-ENG.pdf \(cshp.ca\)](https://www.hpcsc.ca/2020-21-Report-ENG.pdf).

Tech sits on Pharmacy Wellness Task Force

AS PART OF ITS PHARMACY WORKFORCE

Wellness Initiative, the Canadian Pharmacists' Association (CPhA) has established the Pharmacy Wellness Task Force to help identify solutions to improve the morale and mental health of the profession.

The Task Force comprises a diverse membership representing a wide range of expertise, practice areas, and career levels. Representing pharmacy technicians is Robert Solek of Montreal, who is also president of the Canadian Association of Pharmacy Technicians and sits

on the board of the Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada. He currently works in the Pharmacy Policy Development Division for the Non-Insured Health Benefits Directorate at Indigenous Services Canada.

With a focus on defining wellness principles and goals for the profession, developing tools for pharmacy teams and public and provider engagement, the Wellness Task Force will help to ensure that the psychological well-being of both current and future generations of pharmacy professionals is supported and improved.

SCPP looks to add more international pharmacy techs

THE SASKATCHEWAN COLLEGE OF PHARMACY PROFESSIONALS (SCPP) is looking to recruit more pharmacy technicians. "Demand for licensed pharmacy technicians outpaces current supply, with a chronic shortage of pharmacy technicians in Saskatchewan hospital pharmacies," the College noted in its SCOPe newsletter.

One potential solution is through internationally trained pharmacy technicians. "The College continues to receive enquiries from interna-

tionally trained pharmacy technicians seeking licensure in Saskatchewan," says the newsletter. "Developing a pathway for these candidates similar to the Appraisal and Assessment Process for internationally trained pharmacists will be prioritized going forward."

The SCPP Appraisal and Assessment Program is designed to assess the candidate's knowledge, skills, and abilities to practise in Saskatchewan and to identify potential gaps in candidate knowledge prior to licensure.

Three ways techs can support safe and effective patient care

THE ONTARIO COLLEGE OF PHARMACISTS has made three suggestions for pharmacy technicians to support safe and effective patient care.

1. Understand your expanded scope:

With Ontario pharmacy technicians now permitted to administer the COVID-19 vaccine to all age groups under the supervision of a Part A pharmacist—and a publicly funded influenza vaccine by injection, as part of Ontario's Universal Influenza Immunization Program to a person who is two years of age or older—techs must familiarize themselves with the "Administering a Substance by Injection or Inhalation Guideline," complete an injection training course, and register their training with the College before performing any injections. Pharmacy techs performing permitted point-of-care tests (POCTs) may do so only under the direction of a Part A pharmacist who is physically present on the premises at the time,

and must comply with all other requirements in the "Piercing the Dermis for Demonstration and Point-of-Care Tests Guideline."

2. Support use of your pharmacy's medication safety program:

Ensure you are complying with the requirements of your organization's policies and programs for reporting medication incidents and near misses. Recognize near misses and record them. Near misses (i.e., events that could have led to inappropriate medication use or patient harm but did not reach the patient) provide valuable insight into areas of risk and may indicate where systems can be improved to prevent patient harm. If you are practising at a community pharmacy in Ontario, ensure you understand and are engaged with the Assurance and Improvement in Medication Safety (AIMS) Program, which has the goal of reducing the risk of patient harm caused by medication incidents in, or involving, Ontario pharmacies.

3. Explore upcoming changes to Standards of Practice:

In 2021, the National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities (NAPRA) approved new Model Standards of Practice (MSOP) for Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians that harmonizes the two previously separate Standards into one. The College is exploring whether to adopt or adapt the new MSOP, but in the meantime, technicians are encouraged to know the high-level themes in it, and to understand what's included in each domain (Domain 1 – Providing Care; Domain 2 – Knowledge and Expertise; Domain 3 – Communication and Collaboration; Domain 4 – Leadership and Stewardship; and Domain 5 – Professionalism).

For more information, visit [3 Things Pharmacy Technicians Can Do to Support Safe and Effective Patient Care - Pharmacy Connection](#).

CPhM forms committee to review pharmacy technician regulation

THE COLLEGE OF PHARMACISTS OF MANITOBA (CPhM) has created an ad-hoc committee to determine and review issues and barriers related to pharmacy technician regulation in the province.

The Pharmacy Technician Regulatory Issues Ad-Hoc Committee will consider feedback from pharmacy techs, prospective pharmacy techs, pharmacy managers and pharmacists, and will then provide the executive committee and CPhM Council with a concise

list of barriers and issues, along with recommendations on how to address them.

The recommendations are intended to facilitate the attainment of the pharmacy technician designation and scope of practice within the current legislative framework, while still ensuring patient safety and improving patient outcomes. They will also address improvements that can be made to the CPhM's current policies or processes related to initial applications for pharmacy technicians, maintenance of the

pharmacy technician designation, and opportunity for pharmacy technicians to work to their full scope of practice.

The Committee will comprise one CPhM Council Member, one public representative, one Canadian Association of Pharmacy Technicians of Manitoba member, three pharmacy technicians, and two practising pharmacists. It will seek input from those working in rural/remote and urban locations, and community and hospital settings.

Pharmacy technicians test vaccine delivery e-module

A STUDY PUBLISHED IN THE CANADIAN PHARMACISTS JOURNAL¹ describes a test with pharmacy technicians of a new e-module that focuses on immunization stress-related responses (ISSR).

The authors contend that vaccination training courses and programs currently do not include education about mitigating ISSR. The e-module uses CARD (Comfort Ask Relax Distract) to address this knowledge gap and improve the vaccination experience.

A group of second-year pharmacy technician students who elected to take an accredited vaccine injection training program were given access to the CARD e-module after completing mandatory vaccine education components. Students reported positive attitudes about the CARD e-module and believed it facilitated provision of vaccinations using a person-centred approach that promotes vaccination. CARD improved their knowledge in delivering vaccinations and they planned to integrate it into their practice.

To read the article, visit [Perceptions of pharmacy technician students of the CARD \(Comfort Ask Relax Distract\) e-module introduced as part of vaccine injection training - Anna Taddio, Sandra Gerges, Marie Rocchi, Victoria Gudzak, Angelo L. Ilersich, 2022 \(sagepub.com\)](#).

¹Taddio A, Gerges S, Rocchi M, Gudzak V, Ilersich AL. Perceptions of pharmacy technician students of the CARD (Comfort Ask Relax Distract) e-module introduced as part of vaccine injection training. Canadian Pharmacists Journal / Revue des Pharmaciens du Canada. 2022;0(0). doi:10.1177/17151635221139827

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time job on top of volunteering," he says. "I saw how stretched they were and wanted to give back to the profession as well."

If there is now some semblance of balance in his life, Chen credits his wife, who has been "incredibly supportive in helping me accomplish every goal," he says.

Having found his niche at BCPhA, he urges others to explore pharmacy technician roles off the beaten path. "There are so many interesting, non-traditional roles," he says.

Itching for relief: Helping eczema sufferers

RED, SCALY, ITCHY PATCHES ON THE SKIN are the symptoms of eczema, a chronic inflammatory condition. While there are many types of eczema, the most common is atopic dermatitis (A.D.).

A.D. sufferers are not alone; according to the Canadian Skin Patient Alliance, about 10 to 20 per cent of the population lives with the condition in one form or another, and the number of people with it in Canada is even higher than the worldwide average.

The causes are not fully understood, but genetic, immunological, and environmental factors may play a role. The condition can come and go and can migrate around the body. As one patch clears up, another may develop, explains the Eczema Society of Canada. And the problem can be more than skin deep; sufferers may feel embarrassed and self-conscious, and as a result, can experience isolation and low self-esteem.

While there is no cure for eczema, there are many ways in which pharmacy technicians can help these patients.

Dr. Alan Low, primary care pharmacist and pharmacy lead at BioPro Biologics Pharmacy in Vancouver, often performs skincare consultations relating to both aesthetics and medical conditions like eczema. He notes that pharmacy technicians could play a role in cosmetic skincare, for example, recommending noncomedogenic makeup that doesn't clog pores and helps keep skin healthier. "I think it's within the scope of the technician to advise patients on this because we're not talking medical recommendations," he says. In a similar vein, given the importance of keeping skin cleansed and moisturized, technicians could suggest a fragrance-free moisturizer that won't cause the skin to react.

Low believes it is also within the realm of the technician to determine if the patient is seeking camouflage makeup to improve the appearance of their skin, or whether they require referral to the pharmacist to maintain skin health. If the latter, the technician can collect information for the pharmacist on the patient's history, including how long they have had the condition, what topical products they may have used, and any reactions or ill effects as a result.

Additionally, the technician can capture the drug list. "That is all technical information that the technician can provide to the pharmacist," he says. Then it's the pharmacist's role to interpret it and potentially prescribe for a condition such as A.D., as pharmacists in most provinces are authorized to do.

It is also important for technicians to document the material they have collected and maintain the record for future reference, says Low. And while follow-up of OTC recommen-

dations may not be feasible due to time constraints, he suggests technicians do so for more severe cases, especially given the typically long waits to see dermatologists. "Catching atopic dermatitis, eczema seborrheic dermatitis in its early stages makes it much easier to treat and reverse than to let it get worse."

Technicians could also assist in triaging patients. With pharmacists being so busy, "technicians could help identify which patient needs to be seen first, and maybe even schedule a patient for a future appointment if the pharmacist cannot see them that day," says Low. After all, if a patient walks out after waiting to speak with a pharmacist, it is a missed opportunity. "It would be great if the technician could ask just a few more

background questions so they can prioritize that patient in the right way," he says. "It's a win-win for the patient and the pharmacy. It's good for the pharmacy as a business if that customer is retained rather than just walking away frustrated, and I think a technician would be one of the perfect people to balance that."

Eczema resources

- Canadian Dermatology Association (www.dermatology.ca)
- Canadian Skin Patient Alliance (www.canadianskin.ca)
- Eczema Society of Canada (www.eczema-help.ca)
- Eczema Therapies (affiliated with Women's College Hospital; www.eczematherapies.com)
- International Alliance of Dermatology Patient Organizations (www.globalskin.org)

life effects



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