

alberta college of
pharmacists



acpnews

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First-year students gathering for White Coat Ceremony – see article on page 10

Albertans and you

What do Albertans think about pharmacists? How should you communicate with them about your expanded scope of practice?

To answer these and other questions, the college commissioned three focus groups in January 2007. The focus groups were held in Edmonton, Calgary and Westlock, and averaged nine people per session.

Legislation orientation package on its way

Watch your mailbox! A package is on its way to you with the new legislation (on CD) and hard copies of the standards and the orientation material.



Here are some significant findings you might want to ponder.

- Pharmacists' knowledge, friendliness, familiarity with patients' histories and fast service were all noted as important to the participants in developing a long-term relationship with their pharmacist.
- Pharmacists are widely seen by the focus groups as the most important source of medication information,

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Registration renewal coming up!

See pages 3 and 4 for details about changes in the process and how you can win free registration!



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Councillors and our public member can be reached by email via our website at pharmacists.ab.ca under *About, Council*, or by using the search feature to locate them by name.

Staff Directory

All staff are available at (780) 990-0321 or 1-877-227-3838 or by fax at (780) 990-0328.

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**Albertans and you**

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whether prescription or non-prescription. However, the Internet is also widely used, particularly for what participants called less serious or general queries.

- The role of the pharmacist in a health care team was most often and predominantly seen as the master of the medicines or expert on medications, their effects and their interactions.
- Many participants desire the type of legislative changes that will come into effect on April 1. There were unprompted suggestions in all focus groups that pharmacists should have some flexibility to meet patients' drug needs in some circumstances, like emergency or temporary refills, and in the treatment of minor conditions.
- Most people were supportive of the legislative changes when they were clearly communicated to them. Participants saw the changes as reasonable, providing more choice and convenience for patients, and reducing some of the pressure on the health system overall.
- Notwithstanding the general support for the changes, **Albertans require assurances** that pharmacists and/or patients will not be able to easily abuse the new system, that pharmacists will only prescribe in limited circumstances and where a long-term patient relationship exists, and that physicians will retain a prominent role in the health care team. ■

Election under way

If you are in districts 3, 4 or 5, your ballot for the council election will be mailed out on March 15, 2007.

Your completed ballot must reach the college office **by 4:30 p.m. on Thurs., April 12**. Ballots will be counted at noon on April 13.

Please be sure to **mark your ballot with an X** and to make no other marks on the ballot. Also please be sure to use the envelopes provided to send your vote to the college office. ■

Accuracy, your records and patient care

Did you know that, even if you are not signed onto Netcare, patient data that you transmit could become part of the electronic health record (EHR)?

Data from prescriptions paid by the Alberta government, e.g., seniors, and adjudicated through Alberta Blue Cross, automatically becomes part of the provincial EHR and will become the basis for further treatment decisions.

It is more important than ever to be diligent in maintaining patient records accurately and completely.

Incorrect patient information can lead to additional errors (with potentially grave consequences) if another health professional uses that information when assessing and making treatment decisions for the patient.

The new standards of practice require you to verify patient demographic data such as personal health number, date of birth, gender and name of patient (see Appendix A of the standards). ■

New digs?

Have you moved recently and forgotten to let the college know?

We will send you lots of important information this spring about the new legislative framework and the impact it will have on your practice. Make sure the college has your correct address so you will receive it. As a pharmacist, intern or student, remember: not only is it helpful to keep your address current with the college, it's the law!

Update your information on-line, drop us an email, or send us a fax—but let us know where you are so we can keep you up to date on exciting practice changes.



Spring is registration renewal time

Registration renewal packages will be mailed in April. Be sure to give our office a call if you have not received your package by April 30.

You will find a few changes to the information on the renewal form as a result of the new legislation and anticipated changes to the by-laws.

- **The renewal deadline is earlier this year.** Your registration still expires on June 30, but your complete renewal form and payment or on-line renewal **must be received by June 1**. (assuming the revised by-laws are approved by Council in mid-March).
- Pharmacists who have **not renewed before July 1** will be **suspended** and will be assessed a **\$238.50 reinstatement fee** (\$225.00 + \$13.50 GST) in addition to their membership renewal fees.
- You must declare proof of professional liability insurance on your renewal. All pharmacists registered on the clinical register are required to hold at least **two million dollars of professional liability insurance**. This insurance may be either claims-made or occurrence-based in nature and must be a personal malpractice policy. Have your carrier, agency, policy number, certificate number and expiry date handy when you renew.
- **Some titles are changing.** Practising pharmacists will continue to be called clinical pharmacists or, simply, pharmacists as they were for the 2006/07 registration year, and non-practising pharmacists will continue to be called **associates**. Pharmacists who have **voluntarily resigned** will now be classified as cancelled.
- ACP is collecting information that will be used to supply anonymized data to national databases and to compile

aggregate statistics for health workforce planning. **Submitting this information is mandatory** for all pharmacists on the Clinical Register [see *Pharmacists Profession Regulation*, section 41(1)]. Consult the *Registration Renewal Guide* included with your registration renewal form for help completing the Statistical Information section of your renewal. ■

2007/08 annual registration fees

Assuming the revised by-laws are approved by Council in mid-March, the annual registration fee for the 2007/08 membership year will be:

- Pharmacist 2007/2008
\$715.50 (\$675.00 + \$40.50 GST)
- Associate
\$206.70 (\$195.00 + \$11.70 GST)

The increase represents a cost of living adjustment only.

Individuals renewing after July 1 will be also be assessed a Reinstatement Fee of \$238.50 (\$225.00 + \$13.50 GST).

Award congratulations

We are pleased to announce the ACP award recipients for 2007:

M.J. Huston Pharmacist of the Year – Valerie Fong of the Lethbridge Regional Hospital

W.L. Boddy Pharmacy of the Year – The Dispensary Ltd., Red Deer, managed by Joe Tabler

Wyeth Consumer Healthcare Bowl of Hygeia – Joe Gustafson, Olds Value Drug Mart

Join us in congratulating these winners in Banff at the awards breakfast and annual general meeting on May 6, following the tri-profession conference from May 3 to 5, 2007.

Watch for more details about this year's award winners in the May/June 2007 **acp news**.

The pharmacist registration fee **does not** include malpractice insurance. Malpractice insurance is a personal responsibility of each pharmacist and is available through a variety of sources. ■

Attention licensees and proprietors

All completed registration renewal forms are due at ACP by **June 1, 2007**. This requirement applies to pharmacist practice permits and pharmacy licence renewals too.

If your pharmacy is paying the registration renewal fees for employee pharmacists, make sure renewal forms for your store and your pharmacists reach our office **on or before June 1**. ■



Thank you Michael!

Michael Faulkner, one of Council's two public appointees, has regretfully resigned from Council to relocate to Vancouver.

Michael served on Council for two years, contributing significantly to the evolution and effectiveness of ACP's governance. He diligently ensured that council discussions remained focused on the needs of the public, and was instrumental in our success to achieve new legislation.

Council extends its gratitude to Michael for his dedication, wisdom and leadership, and wishes him the very best in his new home in Vancouver.

RENEW ON-LINE AND WIN!

This year, registering on-line could make you a winner. Not only can you save time and postage, but one lucky registrant who renews on-line before June 1, 2007 will win his or her 2007/08 renewal fee.

Only on-line renewals are eligible to win. Your name will be entered automatically when you renew on-line, even if your payment is submitted by cheque.

If you renew by mail...

If you mail your registration renewal, remember to send:

- your **membership renewal form**, with all the pages of the form filled in and signed,
- a paper **copy of your continuing professional development (CPD) log**, and
- your **membership fee payment**.

We must have all of these documents to renew your registration!

If you renew by fax...

If you submit your forms by fax, **please don't call us** to ask if they arrived. Our

switchboard is overwhelmed at this time of year and our receptionist does not have easy access to the fax machine. ACP will contact you after June 1 if your renewal failed to arrive.

If your employer is paying your fees...

Please be sure to give your employer either your completed renewal form and a copy of your CPD log for submission to the college along with your payment, or a copy of your on-line renewal indicating you have completed the on-line process.

And finally...

Don't forget that, if you are a pharmacist, you can also update your registration profile and maintain your Continuing Professional Development Log on-line.

Keeping your CPD log up to date in the *Membership Profile* section of the ACP website is a great way to track your learning, but remember it does not suffice as your **official** CPD log renewal record unless you either submit it electronically at the time of on-line renewal or print a hard copy and send it in.

If you are not renewing on-line, please print the profile and send it with your renewal forms.

You must declare the learning you have completed at the time of renewal, not learning that you plan on doing in the future. You may still add entries to your electronic CPD log after on-line renewal but the version you submit at the time of renewal is the official record.

Please **send copies**, not the originals of your CPD log or your supporting materials, such as CE certificates. Keep the original documents in your records for two years in case you are chosen for a learning portfolio audit.

Remember that most practising members must have earned 15 CEUs between July 1, 2006 and June 1, 2007. Check your renewal form for details.

If you have questions about the membership renewal process, please contact Linda Hagen, Cheryl Shea, or Toni Bos by telephone at (780) 990-0321 or 1-877-227-3838, or by email at linda.hagen@pharmacists.ab.ca, cheryl.shea@pharmacists.ab.ca or toni.bos@pharmacists.ab.ca.

Changed relationships: employers and preceptors to pharmacy students and interns

The *Pharmacists Profession Regulation* speaks to subtle but significant changes to the relationship that employers and preceptors have with pharmacy students and interns.

Pharmacy students who work in pharmacies over the summer must now be registered with ACP before they can perform restricted activities in the pharmacy. Out-of-province students who complete structured practical training (SPT) hours in Alberta after April 1, 2007 must also be registered with ACP. This registration may now be completed by mail, so students do not need to travel to Edmonton to register.

Pharmacy students working in a pharmacy must have a student-preceptor relationship with the pharmacist in order to perform supervised restricted activities. If a student works in a pharmacy outside of an SPT program, the student is considered to be a pharmacy employee under Section 22 of the regulation and may only compound drugs or blood products and participate in the sale of schedule 1 or 2 drugs. The other restricted activities listed in Section 16 of the regulation are off limits, even under a direct supervisory relationship between the pharmacist and the student.

Pharmacy interns must also be registered and participating in the

SPT program to perform activities listed in Section 16 of the regulation and the pharmacist must be acting as a preceptor. Any clinical pharmacist in a pharmacy may assist in precepting an intern if one of the pharmacists is the preceptor of record. Interns who want to work as technicians, especially those with foreign pharmacy degrees, will need to register as technicians beginning in late 2007. At this time, unless they have an intern-preceptor relationship with a pharmacist employer, they too must be considered to be a pharmacy employee under Section 22 of the regulation and supervised accordingly. ■

English language fluency requirements are changing

The *Pharmacists Profession Regulation* provides a new regulatory means for the college to ensure that applicants for registration as pharmacists are proficient in English. On April 1, ACP will adopt the English language fluency requirements established by the National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities (NAPRA).

As of April 1, prospective pharmacists registering as interns on the Provisional Register or interns registering on the Clinical Register must provide proof of English fluency using any one of the following tests: Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), Michigan English Language Assessment Battery (MELAB), International English Language Testing Systems Academic Format (IELTS) or the Canadian Test



Notice of veterinarian suspensions

The Alberta Veterinary Medical Association has notified us that the following veterinarians are no longer eligible to purchase or prescribe pharmaceutical or biological products:

- **Dr. S. Gavin Ellefson**
- **Dr. A. Willow Hope**
- **Dr. Ann Lawson**

The suspensions went into effect on Dec. 21, 2006.



Notice of physician retirement

The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta has notified us that **Dr. James Mabbott** of Edmonton has permanently retired.

for English Scholars and Trainees (CanTEST).

For information on the minimum test scores required to meet or exceed the language proficiency requirements for licensure in Canada, follow the link to the NAPRA website: www.napra.ca/pdfs/professional/Language_Proficiency_Requirements_for_Licensure_as_a_Pharmacist_in_Canada_Nov2006.pdf

All the components (speaking, writing, listening, reading) from the same test

must be used when submitting a score. The speaking component from TOEFL for example may not be combined with the listening component from CanTEST.

Safe practice begins with effective communication between pharmacists, patients and other health care team members. Pharmacists must be sufficiently proficient in English to safely and competently engage in pharmacy practice. ■




So much to learn, so little time!

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD) PLAN

Get ready for change!

On April 1, 2007, new standards for Alberta pharmacists come into effect. This change will bring an unprecedented opportunity for you to expand your scope of practice to provide optimal patient care.

New opportunity brings added responsibility.

Now is a great time to get ready for your expanded scope of practice by completing a thorough self-assessment and identifying your learning needs. You can get started by taking part in a pre-conference workshop immediately prior to the tri-professions conference in Banff, May 3 to 5. At the workshop you will gain hands-on experience with the Continuing Professional Development Plan, make a start on your own plan, network with your colleagues, and earn 2.5 CEUs.

You can find registration information in the pre-conference brochure or click on the Feature Event link on our website for more information. ■

CE requirements for registration renewal

Are you aware that this year your registration renewal must be received at the college office by June 1?

This changed requirement means that you have less than three months until you submit your Continuing Professional Development Log to the college.

Have you already acquired the minimum 15 CEUs for your registration renewal? Or will you be scrambling for continuing education activities in May?

We encourage you to consider your learning needs and undertake learning activities to address those identified needs long before panic sets in. ■

Learning portfolio tip...

Given that spring is a busy time for CE activities, you should take special care to file all your learning portfolio documents in a safe, accessible place.

ACP will audit 700 learning portfolios for the 2006/07 registration year, beginning in September 2007.



Health Canada advisories

After the last edition of the newsletter went to print, Health Canada placed the following advisories on its website. You can obtain a copy by using the links below or by calling Misti Denton at the college office at (780) 990-0321 or 1-877-227-3838, or contacting her by email at Misti.Denton@pharmacists.ab.ca.

The links will take you to the Health Canada website.

- **Xigris® [drotrecogin alfa (activated)]**
www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dhp-mps/medeff/advisories-avis/prof/2006/index_e.html
- **Kang Da, Qing Zhi**
www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ahc-asc/media/advisories-avis/fpa-ape/index_e.html#more
- **Power 58, Platinum Power 58, Ehanix, Jolex, Onyo and Deguozechonghantianxia**
www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ahc-asc/media/advisories-avis/fpa-ape/index_e.html

Health Canada



We get calls...

Generic interchangeability

Currently the *Pharmaceutical Profession Act* gives you the authority to “dispense a drug or drug combination that is the generic or brand name equivalent of that named in the prescription, unless the prescriber indicates otherwise.”

This authority continues under the new *Pharmacists Profession Regulation* which will come into effect on April 1, 2007.

The decision about what is a generic or brand name equivalent is left to your professional judgement. The college does not publish a list or advise pharmacists of generic equivalents. Some pharmacists choose to refer to the Alberta Drug Benefit List for guidance on generic equivalents. Some pharmacists make their own decision based on evidence in the literature.

The responsibility for the decision on equivalence always lies with the individual pharmacist.

Are refills for prescriptions valid if they were written by a physician who has since died or retired?

Officially, if the prescription was written by a physician who was licensed to practise medicine in Canada at the time the prescription was written, the refills are still valid.

However, under the current standards of practice and under the new *Standards for Pharmacist Practice* (Standard 5), you must ensure that the prescription is appropriate for the patient at the time you dispense. Consider whether it is appropriate to continue to fill refills on a prescription when the patient is not being monitored by a physician and, if appropriate, for how long.

Your decision may have to take into account factors such as the difficulty the patient may have in finding a new family physician and the risk of going without a

prescription medication. Remember that prescription refills are valid for a maximum of 18 months after the prescription was first filled.

How do I send prescriptions to my Alberta patients who are temporarily in the US?

Keep in mind that medications arriving in the US from Canada are subject to the laws of the importing country, i.e., the USA. Under the US federal *Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act*, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) “may refuse admission to any drug that ‘appears’ to be unapproved, placing the burden on the importer [the patient] to prove that the drug sought to be imported is in fact approved by the FDA.”

“Unapproved new drugs are any drugs, including foreign-made versions of US approved drugs, that have not been manufactured in accordance with and pursuant to an FDA approval.”

Officially, all seizure is at the discretion of the American government. Therefore, we recommend that pharmacies sending prescription medications to their Alberta patients who are temporarily in the US do the following:

- ensure all prescriptions are properly packaged and labelled;
- include a letter from the pharmacist, on pharmacy letterhead, confirming that the medications were dispensed as a result of legal prescriptions; including the physician's name and address; the pharmacist's name, address and phone number; recipient's name, address and phone number in the US; with instructions to call the pharmacy if there are any questions;
- send the package via insured mail or courier; and,
- limit the quantities dispensed to the amount needed for the personal stay in the US.

Please note that following these recommendations still does not guarantee that the package will be delivered to the intended recipient. ■

Quotations are taken from Information on Importation of Drugs, Division of Import Operations and Policy, FDA; retrieved from www.fda.gov/ora/import/pipinfo.htm.

Selling NHPs not approved for use in Canada

Further to our January/February 2007 **acp news** article entitled "Advertising drugs not approved for use in Canada," we have clarified with the Drug Compliance Verification and Investigation Unit of the Health Products and Food Branch Inspectorate that a retail pharmacy may not import unapproved natural health products (NHPs) into Canada.

Authorized drugs and natural health products will bear either an eight-digit drug identification number (DIN), a natural product number (NPN) or a homeopathic drug number (DIN-HM). This authorization indicates that the products have been assessed by Health Canada for safety, efficacy and quality. In addition, if a retail pharmacy wishes to purchase NHPs from a distributor in Canada, the distributor must hold a valid site licence. ■

TPP changes effective Feb. 1, 2007

The TPP Standing Committee and the TPP Steering Committee have recommended changes to the Triplicate Prescription Program, which were approved by the Council of the College of Physicians and Surgeons at its December meeting. These changes were **effective Feb. 1, 2007**.

1. Medications added to the Triplicate Prescription Program:
 - normethadone (Cophylac® liquid drops)
 - methylphenidate (Biphentin® tablets)
2. Medication removed from the Triplicate Prescription Program:
 - methylphenidate (Concerta® tablets)

Although methylphenidate products are included in the TPP, evidence indicates a low potential for abuse or misuse of this specific formulation of methylphenidate. ■

Influenza vaccine and pregnancy

Infectious diseases pharmacists in Alberta remind colleagues that inactivated influenza vaccine is considered safe in all stages of pregnancy.¹

This reminder is issued on the heels of a large, population-based study that was published in the Feb. 13, 2007 issue of the *Canadian Medical Association Journal*.² Since the authors of the study showed that hospital admissions because of respiratory illness were increased among pregnant women with or without chronic conditions during the influenza season, all pregnant women are likely to benefit from influenza vaccination.

In Canada, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization currently recommends influenza vaccine for pregnant women if they have chronic conditions known to place them at increased risk of influenza-associated complications, if they are a household contact of a person at high risk, or if they will deliver during an influenza season and thus become a household contact of a high-risk newborn.¹

In the study by Dodds *et al*, only 2.6 per cent of all pregnant women and only 6.7 per cent of pregnant woman with a chronic condition were immunized.² A woman's risk for influenza-related complications increases during pregnancy because of the associated physiologic changes including a decrease in immune response and lung capacity.³ As front-line health care providers, you are encouraged to discuss the risks of influenza illness during pregnancy to ensure that pregnant women have the opportunity to benefit from influenza vaccination. ■

Deana Sabuda, Calgary Health Region
Bruce Dalton, Calgary Health Region
Susan Fryters, Capital Health, Edmonton

1 National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI). Update on Influenza Immunization for the 2006-2007 Season. *CCDR* 2006;32 (ACS-7):1-28.

2 Dodds L, McNeil SA, Fell DB, Allen VM, Coombs A, Scott J, MacDonald N. Impact of Influenza Exposure on Rates of Hospital Admissions and Physician Visits Because of Respiratory Illness Among Pregnant Women. *CMAJ* 2007 176:463-468.

3 Shahab SZ, Glezen WP. Influenza virus. In: Gonik B, ed. *Viral diseases in pregnancy*. New York, NY: Springer-Verlag, 1994:215-23.

Give a day to world AIDS

Your pharmacist colleagues with the northern Alberta and southern Alberta HIV/AIDS programs encourage you to take note of this campaign, and to donate a day's pay to the Stephen Lewis Foundation. Mr. Lewis is one of this year's conference speakers; we can support his work in a tangible way.

The fund raising campaign originated with health care professionals, and is now extending to all groups and individuals.

The foundation is a worthy international cause for AIDS relief; unlike many charities, 90 per cent of contributions go directly to those at the grassroots in Africa who need it most!

It's easy to donate or get more information at www.stephenlewisfoundation.org – spread the word!





Are any of your patients suitable for islet transplantation?

As a pharmacist, you may have ongoing contact with diabetic patients with troublesome hypoglycaemia. The UofA's islet transplantation team encourages you to consider referring potential patients to the program.

Islet transplantation is most effective for people who have major difficulties with frequent and severe hypoglycaemia, particularly if they do not get warning symptoms. Other people who have severe difficulties with unpredictable swings in their blood sugars which are not the result of changes in diet or insulin doses can benefit.

Not everyone with Type 1 diabetes is eligible. However, those who could benefit may not be aware they could be a suitable candidate. This is particularly true for patients for whom you are regularly dispensing glucagons.

For more information about the program (for you and for your patients), contact:

Clinical Islet Transplant Program
2000 College Plaza
8215 – 112 Street
Edmonton AB T6G 2C8
(780) 407-1501
www.islet.ca

Loan program for immigrant professionals

The Immigrant Access Fund Society (IAFS) provides micro loans for the accreditation, training, and upgrading of internationally-trained immigrants to enhance their employability and economic self-reliance.

The loan may be used for:

- tuition fees with a recognized post-secondary institution,
- exam fees with a professional governing association,
- travel expenses to sit an exam,
- qualification assessments,
- professional association fees,
- books and course materials,
- living allowance during study time, or
- other related expenses that will help the recipient complete accreditation, training or upgrading programs

To be eligible for a loan, the applicant must:

- be an internationally trained immigrant, who has worked in a profession or trade in another country. The program is not designed to help immigrants learn a new career;
- have an appropriate level of English to work in their field;
- demonstrate they have been accepted into the program they are applying the loan toward;
- lack access to other suitable or affordable financial resources;
- have proof of residency in Canada with an Alberta address.

Loans will not exceed \$5,000 and must be paid back with interest. The annual interest rate is currently 7.5 percent, which is fixed for the duration of the loan. The loaned monies will usually be issued to the vendor of the product or service rather than the individual loan recipient. The term of each loan is a maximum of four years.

For more information or an application form, visit IAF's website at www.iafcanada.org or call Vic Rempel at 403-272-9310. ■

Invitation to be PEBC assessor

The Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada (PEBC) invites interested pharmacists to apply as assessors for the certification examinations. The national exam will be held on **Sun., May 27, 2007 at sites in both Edmonton and Calgary.**

To qualify you must have been licensed in Canada for at least three years. You must also currently be an ACP registrant in good standing and providing or directly supervising patient care services, including dispensing, clinical and drug information services.

Assessors will be involved in the objective structured clinical examination (OSCE) that is used to evaluate candidates as a prerequisite for registration with ACP and most other Canadian colleges. The exam is designed to assess communication/interpersonal skills, the application of knowledge to simulations of commonly encountered patient scenarios, and other aspects of professional competence that do not lend well to written examinations.

Preceptors in the practice setting, e.g., for structured practical training, internship and clerkship programs, and occasional teaching assistants in years 1 and 2 of the academic program, would normally qualify as assessors.

Information about the exam, guidelines for the selection of assessors, as well as an assessor interest survey and response form, can be found on the PEBC Website at:

www.pebc.ca/EnglishPages/OSCEAssrs/AssrHomePage.html

Interested pharmacists outside of Edmonton and Calgary are welcome to apply as assessors. Some travel expenses may be paid to out-of-town assessors.

For the Edmonton site, please email your response form to:

Ms. Lydia Slabyj
wls@ocii.com

Or mail to:
Ms. Lydia Slabyj
5407 - 115 St., Edmonton, AB T6H 3P4

For the Calgary site, please email your response form to:

Yoshiko Shimizu
pebc-calgary@shaw.ca

Or mail to:
Yoshiko Shimizu
6 Glenmount Crescent SW,
Calgary, T3E 4B3

Or fax to:
Yoshiko Shimizu
FAX (403) 475-0566 ■

Do your patients REALLY understand?

Your patients may not understand what you're telling them or what you've given them to read about taking their medications.

According to a recent report by the Canadian Council on Learning, many Canadians are unable to understand the information necessary to deal with their own health, and nearly nine out of 10 older Canadians lack the health literacy skills they need.

The report highlights that, since seniors use the health care system often and have relatively low health literacy levels, health professionals like you should be concerned. Seniors account for one-third of hospitalizations, and nine out of 10 report taking at least one medication. Yet only 12 per cent of Canadians older than 65 have health literacy skills that are considered adequate for the task.

Studies have found that lower literacy or health literacy is associated with poorer self-reported health, inappropriate medication use, non-compliance, poorer glycaemic control, increased prevalence of self-reported complications, less health knowledge, less sharing in decision making about treatment and worse communication with practitioners.

So what can you do? Here are two suggestions.

- Review your patient education materials to ensure they are at an appropriate level. (Although the recommended reading level for public consumption is grade 7, a study in a Montreal clinic found that the average reading level of patient education materials in medical practice was grade 11.5.)
- Use communication techniques suitable for individuals with low levels of literacy, such as asking your patients to repeat back to you what he or she has understood about what you said.

Low health literacy is a problem. Be aware of how you can help your patients follow directions, give informed consent, read health information, and manage their health. ■

Sources:
Canadian Council on Learning, State of Learning in Canada: No Time for complacency (Jan. 26, 2007 news release) www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/Newsroom/Releases/20070126Release_SOLR.htm
Kirkey, Sharon. Low literacy skills expose people to health risks, Edmonton Journal, Jan. 27, 2007.
Rootman, Irving. Health literacy: Where are the Canadian doctors? CMAJ, Sept. 12, 2006, 175(6), p. 606.



Are you connected?

Are you one of the 74 per cent of Alberta pharmacists, interns and students using the college's email system? If not, you could be losing out on important information.

If you need help signing on or have forgotten your user ID or password, please call the college office where Misti Denton can help you. You can reach her at (780) 990-0321 or 1-877-227-3838. Or you can contact her by email at Misti.Denton@pharmacists.ab.ca.



acp xPresses and emails

ACP xPress

Jan. 18 ■ We want to hear from you

acp emails

(issued between Dec. 18, 2006 and Feb. 13, 2007)

External:

- Feb. 8 ■ Anticoagulation management course
- Feb. 9 ■ Invitation to be PEBC assessor
- Correction to link for PEBC assessors page

Operations:

- Dec. 22 ■ Holiday greetings and ACP office hours
- Jan. 16 ■ 2007 conference registration available
- Award congratulations
- Feb. 6 ■ Adding to this year's conference experience

Practice Issues:

- Jan. 12 ■ Extended standards consultation
- Notice of veterinarian suspensions
- Jan. 15 ■ Revised by-laws consultation
- Jan. 16 ■ TPP changes coming Feb. 1
- Jan. 26 ■ Legislation/standards orientations
- Jan. 30 ■ More info on legislation/standards orientations
- Feb. 7 ■ More orientation sessions in Edmonton and Calgary
- Feb. 8 ■ Request for Starnoc capsules

Drug Information:

- Dec. 22 ■ Xigris [drotrecogin alfa (activated)]
- Jan. 10 ■ Foreign product alert
- Feb. 13 ■ Foreign product alert

See also Health Canada advisories on page 6.





A new focus for the UofA's CPE

The Continuing Pharmacy Education (CPE) Office at the UofA's Faculty of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences is in transition.

CPE is changing from delivering traditional continuing pharmacy education courses to developing and delivering comprehensive learning experiences that will better prepare you to use your knowledge and skills in your practice. This change will result in educational programming that will help you become engaged with medication management in new ways.

The office will no longer be a central clearing house for traditional learning opportunities such as print and web-based continuing education courses.

A package mailed to you in February included a distance learning order form. The order form gives you your **last opportunity to access the traditional learning experience from CPE.**

The mailing also included a brochure for a new program called *Anticoagulation: on the road to practice change*. The anticoagulation program is an example of the type of learning programs you will see in the future.

At least two things will remain the same. CPE will continue to deliver high quality programs that strive for excellence. Also, the Alberta College of Pharmacists and the Faculty of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences will continue our partnership to provide a new generation of learning opportunities that are "best of class."

For more details about this exciting change, please refer to the letter mailed to you from Dean Franco Pasutto and Registrar Greg Eberhart.



Impressive White Coat Ceremony highlights students

The third annual White Coat Ceremony, held on Jan. 11, 2007, formally welcomed the Class of 2010 to the pharmacy profession.

Hosted by ACP, the Faculty of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, the Alberta Pharmacists' Association, and the Pharmacy Alumni Association, the event marked the culmination of the students' studies in professionalism and ethics, a fitting opportunity to introduce them to their future responsibilities as practising pharmacists.

Guest speaker, Dr. Al Cook, dean of the UofA's Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine, spoke to the themes of honesty, integrity and building a high level of professional trust. He emphasized the importance of the pharmacists' role in the health care system.

After being introduced to the Alberta Pharmacy Students Association Pledge of Professionalism, each student was "robed" with their dispensing jacket. The newly robed students then signed an enlarged version of the pledge and repeated the ACP Code of Ethics. ■



ACP President Jeff Whissell robes a first-year student.

CE reimbursement

Don't forget that you have access to the \$300 continuing education rebate program administered by the Alberta Pharmacists' Association (RxA).

To learn more about the reimbursement program and to download a copy of the reimbursement form, please log onto the RxA website at www.albertapharmacy.ca/funding/CERimbursement.aspx.

The deadline for claiming reimbursement for the April 1, 2006 to March 31, 2007 period is April 30, 2007.





Banff 2007

Register now!

Strengthening the Bond: Collaborating for Optimal Patient Care

May 3 to 5, 2007
Inter-professional Conference

Stephen Lewis and Rex Murphy, along with an impressive line-up of other speakers, will help you understand how nurses and physicians, and learn how to work effectively together.

May 3, 2007
ACP Pre-Conference Sessions

Two sessions are being offered: *Orientation to Your New Practice Framework* and *Continuing Professional Development—Expanding Opportunities for Professional Development*.

May 6, 2007
ACP Celebration Day

Join your colleagues as we celebrate the year's achievements and recognize our outstanding pharmacists as they receive their awards. Speaker John Cowell from the Health Quality Council of Alberta will challenge you about how you practise. In addition, you can participate in the college's annual general meeting.

You must register separately for the conference and for ACP's pre-conference sessions and the May 6 Celebration Day. You can do this by using the forms in the programs mailed to you or on-line at www.buksa.com.

Registration is filling up quickly.

Don't delay or you will miss this historic event!

Accreditation: Potential 13.5 CEUs for the conference and Celebration Day. Another 2.5 or 2.75 CEUs for the pre-conference sessions.

www.buksa.com

**Strengthening
the Bond**



**Collaborating for
Optimal Patient Care**

...from the faculty

Dr Lisa Guirguis recently joined the UofA's Faculty of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences as an assistant professor. She graduated from the UofA with distinction in 1997 and received her PhD. from the University of Wisconsin.

Dr. Guirguis's expertise in the behavioural sciences and experience in community pharmacy underpins her work in four main areas: health outcomes research, survey measurement, health communication and medication-taking behaviours. Her pharmacy practice research has focused on how to help pharmacists adopt feasible programs related to monitoring and counselling patients with chronic conditions such as hypertension, high cholesterol and diabetes. Her specific research and teaching interests address the role of pharmacists in providing care to patients with chronic diseases, practice change in community pharmacy, patient/pharmacist communications, the concordance framework in medication



Dean's Golf Tournament

Thurs., June 7, 2007 at Blackhawk

taking behaviours, and adapting techniques from the social sciences for research in pharmacy practice.

Academic All Canadians!

A total of 141 Golden Bear and Panda athletes achieved an 80 per cent average or higher in the 2005/06 academic year. The Faculty of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences is proud to acknowledge three students in that distinguished group:

Sara Houlihan, field hockey;
Kristen Rowntree, track and field;
and **Michelle Smith**, basketball.
Congratulations!

The University of Alberta is celebrating its **Centenary in 2008**. The faculty and the Pharmacy Alumni Association are exploring appropriate projects to celebrate the event. Your input is important! Please contact Terry Legaarden (492-8084 or tlegaarden@pharmacy.ualberta.ca) with your suggestions.

On Jan. 12, 2007, approximately 50 pharmacy fans gathered for an evening of UofA hockey and volleyball. Alumni and faculty enjoyed the sports, socializing and door prizes.



Save the date:

- CV Technologies' presentation on evidence-based NHPs, April 19 (time and place tba) presented by the Pharmacy Alumni Association
- Reunion Weekend, Sept. 27 to 30, 2007 ■

In memory



Ronald Ridley Brandt passed away Dec. 27, 2006 in Brooks, AB. He was 70.

Ron graduated from the UofA's pharmacy program in 1960. He owned and operated Brandt Central Drugs Ltd. in Brooks from 1963 until 1990. He was recognized for his outstanding record of community service with the Whitehall-Robin's Bowl of Hygeia in 1987.

Ron will be missed by Doreen, his wife of 44 years, and his family and friends.

Carole Irene Comfort passed away at the Foothills Hospital in Calgary on Jan. 19, 2007 at the age of 68 years. Carole registered with the Alberta College of Pharmacists in 1960, after graduating from the UofA. She worked as a pharmacist for many years in Calgary.

Carole will be missed by her family and friends.

Deirdre Frances Ruane of Edmonton passed away at the age of 39 years. She registered with the college in 1995 after graduating from the UofS.

Deirdre will be missed by her husband and family.