

OH HOW THE **PHARMACIST** ROLE HAS CHANGED!

NLPB Special Pharmacist
Awareness Month Newsletter

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Pharmacists in Newfoundland and Labrador have expanded our scope of practice and standards of care in recent years. Across the province, pharmacists and registered pharmacy technicians are doing more for patients than ever before. From administering injections and prescribing for minor ailments to serving on collaborative care teams and helping people manage their medications, we are changing the face of pharmacy in our province.

Every March, Pharmacist Awareness Month (PAM) celebrates and educates the public about the contributions that pharmacists make in delivering healthcare. At the Newfoundland and Labrador Pharmacy Board (NLPB),

we saw PAM as the perfect opportunity to celebrate the progress we have achieved in our profession. We have profiled four of our pharmacy colleagues each working in their own way to deliver the best possible pharmacy care and services in their communities.

NLPB is proud to celebrate our registrants. Pharmacists are the most accessible healthcare professionals across the country and across our province. This special PAM newsletter illustrates the full and varied nature of pharmacy teams in Newfoundland and Labrador. The 2017 PAM theme, *Pharmacists: Doing more. For you.*, is truly exemplified through these four pharmacy professionals.

SMALL STEPS MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE IN A BUSY PHARMACY



Chad Parsons, associate-owner of the Shoppers Drug Mart in the Goulds, always saw himself being involved in the healthcare field while owning and running a business. He pursued pharmacy as a profession and has been working in the field for 13 years, with the roles in pharmacy changing dramatically during that time. Pharmacy has become a very fast paced industry that continues to enhance the professional services it offers, something Chad has witnessed first-hand.

The early days of his career focused on dispensing, checking for appropriate therapies, and counselling patients on taking medications. Today his typical day includes those same responsibilities, plus managing business activities, participating in the dispensing workflow, as well as providing additional clinical services, such as administering injections, treating minor ailments, and holding clinics for things such as flu shots and diabetes patients. In fact, since the Standards of Practice for pharmacists expanded, the workload at Chad's particular location has continually increased to meet the growing demand for these services. There is a new layer of service added on top of an already high prescription volume.

Although the changes have kept him quite busy, Chad embraces his new role because it allows his patients to get medication, advice, counselling and more – all in one stop. Chad is quick to acknowledge how valuable it was to have a pharmacy team that is open to changes in the way they practice pharmacy, and actively engaged in providing and promoting the expanded services to the patients they serve. This buy-in from the start allowed Chad and his staff to successfully implement these new services into their busy pharmacy by gradually making small adaptations.

"Our Shoppers Drug Mart is located in a more urban area so we get a lot of traffic there. We slowly added the new standards of practice into our workflow to see how it changed the business, talked to our patients about changes as they were integrated, and adjusted accordingly," he noted.

They also have a new consultation room in place that is used for the new scope of practice and counselling services. The additional space allows patients to feel like they are in a comfortable, private and secure professional area.

"People are very happy about these new features and are using word of mouth to tell others," added Chad. "While we've always provided medication advice to patients, the added ability to inject and prescribe allows patients to come directly to the pharmacy. We hear from patients about how they're very pleased to avoid longer waits at a clinic to get a prescription for a minor ailment." It also allows pharmacies to take the strain off of other healthcare settings, including physician offices and emergency rooms.

The most important thing he has learned over his career is to not be afraid of change. Whether the pharmacy is big and busy or small and steady, Chad encourages his peers to embrace the professional changes in a way that works for them. "We didn't jump into it all at once. Instead we picked a piece we're comfortable with and added that in and gradually layered on more changes," added Chad. "Small steps add up to make a big difference for our patients and our profession."

Chad Parsons is the associate-owner and pharmacist-in-charge at Shoppers Drug Mart in the Goulds, NL. He is also the current chair of the Newfoundland and Labrador Pharmacy Board.

GROWING AWARENESS OF THE ROLE OF THE REGISTERED PHARMACY TECHNICIAN



When Colleen Squires decided to pursue a career in pharmacy, her main goal was to make a difference in the lives of the people living in her community. Colleen started as a pharmacy assistant and jumped at the opportunity to become a Registered Pharmacy Technician when it became available. After completing all of the requirements, including four bridging courses, several national and provincial exams and a practical training program, she became the fifth Registered Pharmacy Technician in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Colleen's day-to-day work varies and has recently expanded to include performing and being accountable for the "technical check" on any given prescription, both new and refills. In doing so, Colleen ensures that the prepared prescription contains the prescribed medication in the correct dosage amount and form, and is labelled accurately. Colleen can also help contribute to a more efficient workflow by performing prescription transfers between other pharmacies, taking verbal prescription orders from prescribers and providing technical information to patients, such as demonstrating the use of medical devices like an EpiPen or Aerochamber.

"A lot of people think we just look at the prescription and count out the pills, but really we look at what the medication is, what the ailment is, whether the patient is able to take it, considering interactions, allergies and compliance issues. We always look at the bigger picture," noted Colleen.

Back when Colleen started out, a person working in her career didn't need formal training, with many people often coming from a cashier role and being trained up to a pharmacy assistant. Some courses were offered, but at the end of the day all of the responsibility lay with the pharmacist.

Today, there are higher standards for all pharmacy roles and everyone is more accountable. Pharmacists remain accountable and responsible for the therapeutic and clinical appropriateness of all new and refill prescriptions, as well as all therapeutic consultation while Registered Pharmacy Technicians can take on accountability and responsibility for the technical aspects of those prescriptions. Colleen believes this raises the bar in pharmacy standards and strengthens the protection of patients. It also allows the Registered Pharmacy Technician to alleviate some of the workload from the pharmacist, in turn allowing pharmacists to focus on the clinical side of the practice and, ultimately, increasing the availability of and access to healthcare services for patients.

As the nature of the profession continues to evolve, employees will need to adapt to the changes. She believes the Registered Pharmacy Technician, Pharmacist and Pharmacy Assistant are all part of a collaborative healthcare team and must continue to be proactive in clarifying what each position can and cannot do. If someone is uncertain about working within the expanded scope, Colleen notes that pharmacists still have the ultimate oversight. She is just glad the opportunity is there for those who are interested in having a greater role and accountability in the pharmacy profession.

Colleen Squires is a Registered Pharmacy Technician currently working at Shoppers Drug Mart in Gander and is the first Pharmacy Technician to serve on the Newfoundland and Labrador Pharmacy Board.

TAKING A NEW PATH IN PHARMACY PRACTICE



Greg Batt grew up in his father's pharmacy in Twillingate knowing, even as a young boy, that he would follow in his father's footsteps and become a pharmacist. What he didn't know then was, despite the family tradition, Greg would end up practicing pharmacy in a non-traditional way. As independent owner of Breakwater Pharmacy and The Cove Clinic in Portugal Cove - St. Philip's, Greg splits his time between the dispensary and the clinic, evolving the traditional models of both dispensing and professional collaboration along the way.

Natural growth at Breakwater Pharmacy resulted in the need for more space, giving Greg and his team the chance to build their space to suit the recently expanded scope of pharmacy and the subsequent need for more clinical consultation. Most pharmacies are built in a standard assembly line style - with the prescription dropped off at one end, dispensed behind the counter in the middle, and picked up at the other end - with limited pharmacist/client interaction in the process. While this model works well in many cases for many pharmacists, Greg saw Breakwater's renovation as an opportunity to reassess his practice to fit his needs. He reviewed international research on new and best practices in pharmacy and engaged his team in the renovation process, ultimately revamping the workflow at Breakwater Pharmacy.

The most noticeable change was putting pharmacists up at the front of the store, instead of behind the usual raised counter at the back. In this workflow model, pharmacists counsel patients when the prescription is dropped off - before it is filled - giving them the opportunity to identify potential conflicts and conduct clinical interventions before dispensing. Patients also get the benefit of direct, immediate access to pharmacists from the get-go, rather than seeing their pharmacist as

the last point of contact. The more direct contact between a pharmacist and patient, the better the patient outcomes are likely to be - a key driver behind Greg's innovative approach to Breakwater Pharmacy's workflow.

The same is true for his involvement in The Cove Clinic and working with the physicians who practice there. What started as him being mostly a supporting resource on medications for the physicians evolved to Greg having a more hands-on clinic management role. This allowed Greg and his team to be much more active in patient care. Generally, a pharmacist is engaged after the physician consultation at the point of dispensing, however The Cove Clinic's collaborative model provides a more proactive role for the pharmacist. Greg and his team are involved and consulted by physicians up front as they make patient diagnosis and treatment decisions, resulting in greater efficiency for both professions and strong benefits for their patients.

So, while he can't remember a time when he didn't want to follow in his father's professional footsteps, Greg is undoubtedly making his own path and quite possibly changing the pharmacy footprint in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Greg Batt has been practicing pharmacy for six years. He served as Chair of the Pharmacists Association of Newfoundland and Labrador (PANL) for two years and as Chair of PANL's Professional Practice Committee. Greg has also received James C. Quick Award from PANL and was involved in writing PANL's The Pharmacist Option white paper. While in Pharmacy School, Greg was also the recipient of "The Innovation in Patient Care Award" for a callback program he designed and piloted.

BONAVISTA PHARMACIST ALLEVIATES PRESSURE IN COMMUNITY HEALTHCARE



Jason Ryan pursued a career in pharmacy driven both by his desire to help people and his love for science – he says you’d never catch him in an English course. He’s been a practicing pharmacist for 18 years and currently works at Bonavista Pharmacy. While rural healthcare has its challenges, Jason sees the many opportunities it offers for growth instead.

The expanded scope of pharmacy practice has undoubtedly helped with accessibility to healthcare in rural communities. Pharmacists are now able to initiate new prescriptions for certain conditions, extend prescriptions for chronic medications and administer injections, which is a major advancement. It’s important to have these options available in places like Bonavista, where people could be waiting for weeks for a doctor.

In many rural areas, physicians often rotate in for short periods of time and the local pharmacist is a constant and reliable thread in filling the gap for both medical professionals and community members. Many people will visit a pharmacist for medical advice first, as it reduces their wait time and helps alleviate the “worry factor” when a physician is not available. Jason has seen the true benefit that these additional services have provided in Bonavista where community members are happily taking advantage of the pharmacists’ expanded role. Last year, Jason gave over 120 flu shots, which patients can schedule a 15-minute appointment for instead of waiting in line at a clinic.

“One time, a lady was getting married who developed a cold sore just before her wedding and didn’t have time to wait in the ER. I prescribed a medication that cleared it up for her big day,” said Jason. “She came in after the wedding to share how appreciative she was, and that’s very rewarding to me.”

In addition to being in the pharmacy, Jason works with other healthcare professionals in the local long-term care facility. He participates in interdisciplinary meetings to add

his perspective and knowledge, aiding in the diagnoses and treatment of the facility residents. When a resident has a specific issue, Jason meets with the physician and/or nurses to help determine the proper course of action. He also conducts medication reviews and provides medication packaging, as well as audits the facility medication room to ensure proper storage for quality and safety. Again, he has witnessed the real impact of his multi-faceted role in the community through this collaborative healthcare model.

“I had a patient who was in St. John’s for specialized treatment who raved to the physician about the advice and care I was providing so much that he was convinced that I was her family doctor, even when she was telling him I was her pharmacist,” said Jason. “When patients develop that relationship with you and they prefer to come to you for care and look to you for advice, that makes the work very special.”

Pharmacists remain among the most accessible healthcare professionals. Patients do not need an appointment to come in for advice, counselling and now additional services including prescriptions for minor ailments and injections. With three pharmacists on his team in Bonavista and looking to add a fourth, Jason sees the opportunity to grow the pharmacist role in his community even more. “With an additional pharmacist on our team, we’ll be able to schedule more clinical time into our day to do things such as antibiotic call backs and even more counselling,” added Jason. “I also hope to see more publically-funded payment models in the future that will allow more patients to access our services and alleviate the burden on rural healthcare even more.”

So while Jason may not have enjoyed English courses in his school days, he is certainly helping to write a new story for the pharmacy profession and expand its role as part of the full healthcare team.

Jason Ryan is a pharmacist currently working at Bonavista Pharmacy.