

THINK PHARMACISTS

MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE NORTH

PROFILE

Pharmacy Regional Director
Labrador-Grenfell Health Authority
Amanda Ropson



As Regional Director for Labrador-Grenfell Health, Amanda Ropson is responsible for the pharmacy services in three hospital pharmacy departments, three community health centres, and 14 nurse-lead community clinics in addition to her role as Pharmacist in Charge of Charles S. Curtis Memorial Hospital in St. Anthony.

She enjoys her job, but it's not without its challenges and every day is something different. Amanda and her pharmacy team are often the only point of contact for pharmacy related services for nurses in rural clinics and health centres. Most of the communities are hours away from a pharmacy, some can only be accessed by plane. Then there's Mother Nature to contend with.

"We have to think about 'what if the weather comes in' or 'what if the transport is stalled,' says Amanda. "Our supplier is not just down the road. We sometimes have to think outside the box if we can't get what we need up the road or in an hour."

Technology can also be a challenge when working in the north. The provincial electronic health record helps by providing complete, up to date patient records, but internet access is often limited in the north so Amanda works closely with her colleagues throughout the region to obtain the necessary information the "old fashion way".

"If there's connectivity issues then we have to revert back to paper documentation." A back up plan for when the internet is down is par for the course. Amanda also says, "In the age of moving away from paper it feels that we can't do that as quickly as we'd like because we always have to think about 'what about connectivity' or 'what if there's no access.'"



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Like many areas in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, healthcare practitioner recruitment in the north can result in limitations of pharmacy services. There are services you want to offer but cannot due to the human resource constraints. The Regional Health Authority is very supportive, constantly recruiting and working diligently to try and bring increased pharmacy services to the area.

“You struggle because there is so much you want to do to expand and work to your full scope.”

Working in the north gives you exposures to many different things that you might not come across in the larger centres. You see a broader scope of illness. Since a specialty hospital or clinic might be inaccessible to the patient for geographic reasons, you need to be proficient enough to provide a wider variety of services that might otherwise be handled by a specialist if practicing in a big city.

So why does Amanda persist? She loves the variety in her job. “Hospital pharmacy provides so many opportunities to have a positive impact on patient care and there are so many new initiatives that demonstrate the need for clinical pharmacy involvement and that makes the work rewarding.”

