

Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians

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As pharmacists embrace their expanded roles, they recognize they may need to rethink their existing workflows so that they can maximize the time they have available for clinical services. Pharmacy technicians can be an effective addition to practice, especially if the scope of their responsibilities is maximized.

As a regulated health care professional, the pharmacy technician has the authority to perform certain tasks under their own authority. Generally speaking, pharmacy technicians are accountable and responsible for the technical aspects of both new and refill prescriptions, that is, for the correct patient, drug dosage form/route, dose, and doctor. Pharmacists, by contrast, are accountable and responsible for the therapeutic or clinical appropriateness of all new and refill prescriptions and therapeutic consultation.

Pharmacists can also accept verbal prescriptions (except for narcotics, controlled drugs, benzodiazepines, and targeted substances) and transfer prescriptions.

Regulation of Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians

In Canada, pharmacy is one of many self-regulatory professions. Accordingly, the federal and provincial/territorial governments have delegated their authority to regulate certain professions to professional associations or other external bodies. These delegations of authority make it possible for certain professions, such as pharmacy and medicine, to establish performance, technical, ethical and educational standards to guide their practice, and to license individuals and practice environments. Public protection is a part of their mandate, and they do so by ensuring that licensing and performance standards are met or exceeded and by taking disciplinary actions when standards are not met.

As a result of pharmacy technician regulation, pharmacists are able to provide more comprehensive patient care services and promote optimal pharmacy services for the public.

NAPRA

The National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities (NAPRA) is an association of pharmacy regulatory bodies whose main purpose is to provide

information and guidance on pharmacy regulation in Canada to its members as well as the public. NAPRA's member organizations regulate pharmacy practice and pharmacy operations in their respective jurisdictions in Canada.

NAPRA works on behalf of its members in areas such as:

- Modelling national standards and guidelines that can be adopted and adapted by its members. By harmonizing pharmacy practice across jurisdictions, pharmacy professionals can move more easily between them and patients receive consistent pharmacy care;
- On behalf of all Canadian pharmacy regulatory authorities, engaging in dialogue with federal and other federal, provincial, territorial and international government agencies, as well as various health-related professional organizations;
- On behalf of its members, administering programs such as the National Drug Schedules and Pharmacists' Gateway Canada;
- Providing a forum to discuss issues relevant to pharmacy practice across the country on a national level. (1)

Addressing Safety Risks

Whether pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, students, or interns, all pharmacy professionals need coverage for actual or alleged malpractice, or errors and omissions. In pharmacy, small errors and omissions can easily create adverse effects for patients. In busy work environments, pharmacists should have systems in place to minimize the risk of such errors.

Pharmacy technicians, regardless of the role they are fulfilling, are expected to recognize the occurrence of adverse events or close calls.

Generally, an adverse event is an event that results in unintended harm to a patient and is caused by the service or care provided to the patient rather than the patient's underlying medical condition. The term "close call" pertains to a potentially harmful event that does not harm the patient due to prompt intervention or good fortune (also known as a near-miss). The term "good catch" refers to just-in-time detection of a potential adverse event. (2)

Pharmacy technicians are also accountable and responsible to:

- Assess the immediate safety and care needs of patients affected by adverse events and close calls, and provide appropriate interventions;
- Inform the pharmacist of any adverse events and close calls and disclose the information as appropriate;
- Participate in patient safety initiatives and promote them;

- Document and review adverse events and close calls and develop policies and procedures to minimize adverse events and to promote safety initiatives.

The MedThree Advantage

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Sources:

1. <https://napra.ca/pharmacy-regulation-canada>
2. https://napra.ca/sites/default/files/2017-08/Model_Standards_of_Prac_for_Cdn_PharmTechs_Nov11.pdf