

Position Paper: Changes to Pharmacy Technician Practice Framework

Introduction

Pharmacy technicians use a unique set of skills to positively impact the care provided to Albertans. In doing so, they collaborate with pharmacists and other members of the healthcare team to help patients achieve their health goals. Current regulations and policies provide a barrier to realizing the potential of pharmacy technician practice on the provision of quality pharmacy services. Revisions to the applicable components of the practice framework will create opportunities for realizing practice potential and ultimately contribute to improving overall health outcomes. Three changes to the provincial practice framework that will positively impact pharmacy practice are:

1. Ensuring Alberta pharmacy professionals continue to have a broad scope of practice
2. Authorizing qualified pharmacy professionals to supervise pharmacy operations
3. Recognizing the evolution of pharmacy practice settings

Administering Drugs and Vaccines by Injection

Alberta pharmacists have the broadest scope of practice in Canada.¹ This state of practice allows for greater opportunities for pharmacists to improve overall health outcomes. Expanding the pharmacy technician scope of practice is anticipated to have a comparable positive impact. In order to do so, pharmacy technicians must be authorized to perform the following health services restricted activities:

- To cut a body tissue, to administer anything by an invasive procedure on body tissue below the dermis or mucous membrane
- To administer a vaccine or a parenteral nutrition

Administration of drugs by injection is a specifically taught procedure that for many individuals is an activity of daily living. As experts in sterile compounding, pharmacy technicians are extensively trained in infection prevention and aseptic technique procedures.² These skills are transferrable to the technical task of administering a drug or vaccine. In some countries pharmacy technicians are authorized to administer drugs by injection and a movement in this direction is already being seen in some Canadian jurisdictions.

¹ Canadian Pharmacists' Association. *Pharmacists' Scope of Practice in Canada*. Available from: <https://www.pharmacists.ca/pharmacy-in-canada/scope-of-practice-canada/>

² Canadian Pharmacy Technician Educators Association. *Educational Outcomes for Pharmacy Technician Programs in Canada*. (2017) Available from: <https://www.cptea.ca/>

Pharmacist-managed vaccine programs have increased immunization rates³, yet there are still situations where patients are unable to receive an immunization at their pharmacy. Pharmacy technicians currently play an important role in facilitating immunization programs. Through the pharmacist retaining responsibility for assessing an individual's health status prior to administering a vaccine or drug, the pharmacy technician can safely complete the task of administration.⁴ This collaborative practice opportunity will allow for opportunities to further improve immunization rates.

As the pharmacy technician's scope of practice expands, the *Health Professions Act* role statement will require amendment to provide a clearer description of pharmacy technicians' overall scope of practice.

Pharmacy Technicians as Licensees

Ensuring the accuracy and quality of product distribution is a responsibility that pharmacy technicians and pharmacists share. This includes the ability to safely prepare compounded preparations. Model compounding standards developed by the *National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities* recognize the role pharmacy technicians play as compounding supervisors.⁵ For pharmacy technicians, assessment at entry to practice in this area accounts for 43% of the total areas evaluated, while for pharmacists this area accounts for only 13%.⁶⁻⁷ This demonstrates a shift in practice and reinforces pharmacy technicians' qualifications. A pharmacy technician is qualified to manage the operation of a compounding and repackaging pharmacy and ensure that pharmacy services will be provided without undermining patient safety or the quality of the services provided. In fact, a pharmacy technician may be better suited to ensuring this technical role is completed. The following changes should be made to allow pharmacy technicians to fulfil the role of a licensee:

- Allow a pharmacy technician to apply for a Compounding and Repackaging pharmacy license in order to act as the licensee.

³ J.E. Isenor, N.T. Edwards, T.A. Alia, K.L. Slayter, D.M. MacDougall, S.A. McNeil and S.K. Bowles, Impact of pharmacists as immunizers on vaccination rates: A systematic review and meta-analysis, *Vaccine*, 10.1016/j.vaccine.2016.08.085, **34**, 47, (5708-5723), (2016).

⁴ Atkinson D, Adams A, Bright D. Should Pharmacy Technicians Administer Immunizations?. *Inov Pharm*. 2017;8(3): Article 16.<http://pubs.lib.umn.edu/innovations/vol8/iss3/16>

⁵ National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities. *Model Standards for Pharmacy Compounding of Non-Hazardous Sterile Preparations*. 2016. Available from: <https://napra.ca/general-practice-resources/model-standards-pharmacy-compounding-non-hazardous-sterile-preparations>

⁶ Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada. *Pharmacy Technician Qualifying Examination Blueprint*. Available from: https://www.pebc.ca/index.php/ci_id/3082/la_id/1.htm

⁷ Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada. *Pharmacy Technician Qualifying Examination Blueprint*. Available from: https://www.pebc.ca/index.php/ci_id/3082/la_id/1.htm

Application of Direction

Pharmacy technicians practice under direction of a pharmacist.⁸ Direction differs from supervision (required for students, interns and non-regulated employees) and allows for broader application of responsibilities; however, components of the practice framework have not yet been amended to appropriately reflect pharmacy technician practice. The following changes should be made to address this gap:

- Amend requirements for pharmacist in attendance in a licensed pharmacy, where applicable, to accurately reflect the practice of pharmacy technicians under direction as opposed to all pharmacy practice requiring supervision by a pharmacist.
- Authorize pharmacy technicians to supervise the operation of a satellite pharmacy in accordance with authorization to practice under the direction of a pharmacist.

As healthcare evolves, the restrictions on pharmacy technicians to practice within a historical pharmacy dispensary present challenges to meeting ever-changing patient needs. In situations where dispensing and compounding activities are separated, or pharmacy services are provided remotely, the clinical pharmacist or courtesy pharmacist responsible for providing direction to a pharmacy technician may not be in the same pharmacy, nor directly involved in the evaluation of a prescription, counselling or assessing a patient's health history. Pharmacy technicians may also not report to a clinical or courtesy pharmacist providing direction. As outlined in the *Pharmacist and Pharmacy Technician Profession Regulation*, pharmacy technicians may supervise pharmacy employees when a pharmacist consents to the supervision. This requirement does not align with the application of direction.

In order to reflect current and future practices the conditions within which a pharmacy technician is authorized to perform restricted activities and supervise non-regulated employees must be clarified by:

- Amending sections 21 and 22 of the *Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians Profession Regulation*

Questions about this paper should be directed to info@ptsa.ca

⁸ Government of Alberta. *Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians Profession Regulation*. Alberta Regulation 129/2006. Available from: https://www.pebc.ca/index.php/ci_id/3082/la_id/1.htm