



Pharmacy technicians to become regulated profession

HEU taking steps to clarify implications for members

Across the country, more and more provinces are moving to regulate pharmacy technicians. In British Columbia, the College of Pharmacists of B.C. is also taking steps to develop a regulatory program for pharmacy technicians including a “scope of practice” statement.

While the implications of the new regulatory process for Hospital Employees’ Union members are not yet clear, the union continues to collect information on the changes from both the College and from health employers.

College of Pharmacists develops scope of practice statement

While many details surrounding the move to regulate the profession are not yet clear, the College of Pharmacists has provided a page on its website containing information related to these developments. (This abbreviated link will take you to this web page: <http://tinyurl.com/CPBCptr>).

The scope of practice developed by the College for regulated pharmacy technicians is also available on the site and reads:

Regulated pharmacy technicians will have independent authority, responsibility and liability (required by HPA Bylaw 80 to have liability insurance) to prepare, process and compound prescriptions, including:

- 1. receive and transcribe verbal prescriptions from practitioners,*
- 2. ensure that a prescription is complete and authentic,*
- 3. transfer prescriptions to and receive prescriptions from other pharmacies,*
- 4. ensure the accuracy of a prepared prescription,*
- 5. perform the final check of a prepared prescription, and*
- 6. ensure the accuracy of drug and personal health information in the PharmaNet patient record.*

In the near future, it is expected that the provincial government will issue a ministerial order to sanctioning the College’s new by-laws and enabling it to regulate pharmacy techs.

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Because of these developments, the job title “pharmacy technician” will become a protected title for regulated pharmacy technicians.

The title for non-regulated pharmacy techs has not yet been determined.

For pharmacy techs seeking regulation, a bridging program will be available to current members, starting this summer, though not all four modules will be ready until 2011.

The bridging programs are administered by UBC Continuing Education. You can find more information about the modules, including the option of challenging three of the four modules, on the College of Pharmacists web page.

The College also conducted a web seminar this past May where they reviewed ongoing developments for pharmacists and pharmacy techs. This is also available on their website.

Impact of regulation on the workplace

Employers will now have the opportunity to phase in the use of regulated pharmacy tech positions at their operations. Obviously, this an important factor related to the ongoing and future reorganization of work in pharmacy departments.

But because the full bridging program will not be available until 2011, pharmacy techs will have at least a six to 18 months wait before knowing what kind of restructuring may take place and what the demand for regulated pharmacy technicians might be.

Members will then have until 2015 to complete the bridging program.

Next steps for HEU

While the College is the regulatory body for pharmacy technicians, issues related to how regulated pharmacy tech jobs are developed, implemented and compensated will be addressed through discussions and/or negotiations between the union and health employers.

Health authority employers recently struck a province-wide working group to address these issues.

They have not released any information to the union about their plans, although they have indicated informally that no firm decisions have been made as of yet.

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There is also a distinct possibility that health authorities may not implement regulated pharmacy technician positions in a consistent fashion across the province.

In order to get discussions underway, HEU has sent a letter to the Health Employers Association of BC requesting a meeting on the new regulations and implications for HEU members. More specifically, the union has posed a number of questions to employers.

1. What is the intention for the utilization of regulated pharmacy technicians?
2. How many regulated pharmacy technicians will be employed and in what facilities?
3. What is the training plan?
4. What is the implementation schedule?

The union expects that once formal discussions begin, a number of other questions will arise concerning the introduction of regulated pharmacy technicians and the impact on HEU members.

If you have any questions, please contact your servicing representative or Stephen Elliott-Buckley, in the HEU Research Department, at 604-456-7040 or 1-800-663-5813.

July 6, 2010