



Regulation of pharmacy technicians

HEU close to agreements on supports for members seeking to upgrade qualifications

HEU is in the process of finalizing a number of agreements with health employers that will provide support to pharmacy members who are considering upgrading their qualifications to become regulated professionals.

Earlier this year, changes were made to the regulation governing pharmacy practice and as a result the job title "Pharmacy Technician" will be a reserved title for the regulated profession registered with the College of Pharmacists.

The Canadian Council for Accreditation of Pharmacy Programs has approved a new curriculum and program which includes a shortened bridging version for those already working in pharmacy practice who wish to become registered pharmacy technicians.

Pharmacy technicians who become regulated will work more independently and with less supervision from a pharmacist.

Health authority plans for pharmacy techs not finalized

HEU has been working with health authorities and pharmacy directors to obtain clear information about their intentions for the use of pharmacy technicians in their operations.

While no employer's plans are final, they have identified, in many cases, the need for 70 to 80 per cent of existing positions to be converted to regulated pharmacy technicians over the next several years. In smaller sites, all positions may be filled with regulated pharmacy technicians.

Wage rate and benchmark issue goes to arbitration

HEU has also been negotiating with the Health Employers Association of B.C. on developing a new benchmark and wage rate for the regulated pharmacy technician, but since the parties were unable to agree, the issue is scheduled to go to arbitration at the end of September.

While the pay rate will not be determined until the outcome of the arbitration, the employer agrees the new rate will be higher than the current rate.

Bridging program

The shortened bridging modules referred to above are now available and will be through 2015. And some pharmacy technicians have already completed the program.

But many others are waiting for more certainty about the employers' plans and about how the workplace will change before they pursue the bridging process.



“HEU has discussed with health employers the need to provide supports to those impacted by the regulatory change and who wish to take the bridging program,” says HEU’s acting secretary-business manager Bonnie Pearson.

“As a result, in some parts of the province employers will provide some direct financial assistance. In other parts of the province members will be eligible to apply for support from the union-managed FBA Education Fund which has recently secured new funding. “

The FBA Education Fund committee meets later this summer to determine the exact application procedure and selection process for pharmacy members seeking support.

More information on this process will be available in September. Please do not apply for this support before this information is made available.

HEU is also pressing for other forms of support from employers, such as flexibility around scheduling at exam time, free text books, and employer-supported study groups and on-line chat rooms.

Converting into regulated pharmacy tech positions

The union is in the process of finalizing written agreements with most health authorities on the transition process. The agreements may differ from one health authority to the next, but HEU’s goal is to put satisfactory arrangements in place which give certainty and support to members.

In most cases, the employer will provide “conditional conversion opportunities” this fall for an identified number of affected positions at each facility. The opportunities will be awarded to interested members on a seniority basis. Members are not obliged to apply for conversion.

These are not all of the positions that will be converted, but they are the number of positions that health authorities will commit to at this time. Note that this is not a job posting process, meaning that no one will bid on anyone else’s job through this process.

Members will have more than two years to complete the regulation process, and the regulated position will be guaranteed for them during the transition.

“This will give members more certainty, and will help them decide whether to take the bridging modules,” says Pearson.

HEU and health employers are also discussing an additional process that would allow those members not awarded a conditional conversion opportunity, but who take the bridging module, to directly convert into a regulated pharmacy technician effective their date of registration.

These agreements are still being finalized and are at different stages in each health authority. More information will be forthcoming as each agreement is signed.

You should speak with your shop steward or servicing representative if you have any questions.

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