

College of Pharmacists of British Columbia



Collaboration
(Community)

Collaboration

Health Professions Act (HPA) bylaws and the NAPRA Model Standards of Practice for Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians in Canada outlines requirements for pharmacy technicians to communicate and collaborate effectively, as well as performing activities consistent with their scope of practice.

As a pharmacy technician, it is your duty and responsibility to **communicate and collaborate** effectively with everyone around you.

Communication and collaboration are essential for patient care and to achieve the outcomes that a team sets out to accomplish. [NAPRA's Model Standards of Practice for Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians in Canada](#) describe this as:

“Pharmacy professionals demonstrate sensitivity, respect, empathy, and inclusion, and ensure effective communication and collaboration with patients, the pharmacy team, other health professionals, and other stakeholders”

This includes five key principles for pharmacy professionals to follow:

1. Pharmacy professionals communicate effectively.
2. Pharmacy professionals work in partnership with patients.
3. Pharmacy professionals work in partnership with pharmacy colleagues, other health professionals, and other stakeholders.
4. Pharmacy professionals document care, actions, and decisions to enable collaboration and continuity of care.
5. Pharmacy professionals maintain appropriate records to enable collaboration and continuity of care.

Communication

Effective communication is a skill. It involves exchanging ideas, thoughts, opinions, knowledge, and data so that the message is received and understood clearly. It means having an ability to listen attentively and to convey information efficiently with sensitivity to patient confidentiality, respect, and empathy. When effective communication takes place, both the sender and receiver feel satisfied. Developing and using this skill plays a key role in keeping patients safe.

Effective communication between pharmacy technicians and patients or practitioners can prevent errors that could harm a patient. Likewise, pharmacy technicians having an open



dialogue with their co-workers and supervisors enable a safer environment to report and discuss an error if one happens and to prevent future errors.

Effective communication includes ensuring both verbal *and* written communication is timely, effective, and clear.

Consider asking patients and colleagues to repeat back verbal instructions that may be unclear or spell out words that could be misheard on the phone. For example, “*Benadryl*” can sound like “benazepril” or “*Celexa*” can sound like “*Zyprexa*”.

Avoid confusing abbreviations or decimal points in your written communication. For example, the abbreviation “OD” could be mistaken for “once daily” or “right eye”, while the quantity “5.0 mL” could be misread as “50 mL”.

Double check critical information such as units when being provided with a weight. Mixing up 23 lbs and 23 kgs could lead to serious consequences for patients.

Written notes that are left by a pharmacy technician should also be documented in a *timely and effective* way that is clearly understood by pharmacy and other health professionals. For example, when leaving a note for a colleague, include two patient-specific identifiers, your own identity, the date, and time the note was taken, and what is incomplete and still needs to be done. Notes should be written with as much information as possible, so the intended recipient has all the necessary information to follow-up and carry out any work they need to accomplish.

For example, if a pharmacy technician taking in a prescription learns a patient has developed a “dry, hacking cough” while taking lisinopril, a clear written note would help bring this to the pharmacist’s attention for appropriate action to be taken.

Pharmacy technicians must also ensure they document any actions, decisions, and critical information regarding a patient’s healthcare in the *patient record*. For example, updating patient allergy information in the patient record ensures the pharmacy team has current information to carry out their work and make appropriate decisions. This is why it is important for pharmacy records to be *accurate, legible, complete, easily accessible, and maintained for the appropriate length of time*.

Collaboration

Pharmacy technicians play a key role as part of the healthcare team consisting of patients, peers, and practitioners. As part of a team, it is important for all members to understand their role in a patient’s care. This is why it is important for a pharmacy technician to *identify their registrant class* in any interaction with a patient or practitioner.

Patients and healthcare providers may assume anyone they speak to from the pharmacy is a pharmacist. Clearly identifying your registrant class when answering phone calls and wearing a



badge with your registrant class displayed will help patients and other health professionals understand what your role is.

A key aspect of working in partnership with colleagues, health professionals and other stakeholders includes *leveraging the expertise and availability* of the professionals around you. Knowing when to ask for help and when to refer are crucial to being part of a healthcare team where no single individual is expected to have all the answers.

For example, a pharmacy technician who learns of a newly diabetic patient having trouble with diet planning can leverage the expertise of a dietitian in collaboration with the pharmacist to refer their patient for nutritional counselling. Documenting this on the patient file will allow the pharmacy team to follow up in the future and see how things went.

Being a part of any healthcare team also involves *establishing and maintaining appropriate professional relationships*. This is echoed by the [Code of Ethics](#) for pharmacy professionals and includes relationships between pharmacy technicians and patients as well as pharmacy technicians and other healthcare professionals. Examples of inappropriate relationships may include aspects of workplace bullying, gossip, exclusion or toxic relationships, or the acceptance of inappropriate gifts. Relationships must remain professional in order to protect trust in pharmacy professionals, allow for objective decision-making, and support collaborative care for patients.

Scope of Practice

Another key aspect of collaboration is practicing within one's scope of practice. Keep in mind, this is not only important to ensure each health professional is doing what they are best trained to do, but it is also a legal requirement.

From [HPA Bylaws Schedule F Part 1 - Section 4\(1\) & \(2\)](#):

(1) Pharmacy technicians in a community pharmacy may prepare, process and compound prescriptions, including

- (a) receiving and transcribing verbal prescriptions from practitioners,
- (b) ensuring that a prescription is complete and authentic,
- (c) transferring prescriptions to and receiving prescriptions from other pharmacies,
- (d) ensuring the accuracy of a prepared prescription,
- (e) performing the final check of a prepared prescription, and
- (f) ensuring the accuracy of drug and personal health information in the PharmaNet patient record.

(2) Despite subsection (1), a pharmacy technician in a community pharmacy may dispense a drug but must not

- (a) perform the task of ensuring the pharmaceutical and therapeutic suitability of a drug for its intended use, or
- (b) do anything described in
 - (i) sections 6(5), 6(10), 10(2), 11(3), 11(4), 12, 13(2), 13(3) or 13(4) of *HPA Bylaws Schedule F Part 1*, or
 - (ii) Part 4 of this Schedule
- (c) dispense a drug pursuant to *HPA Bylaws Schedule F, Part 5*

Why is this a fundamental standard?

Case in point:

A 2008 study of more than 4,500 healthcare professionals assessed the importance of respectful behaviour and its impact on patient safety. The majority of respondents reported a link between respectful behaviour and fewer medical errors as well as good quality patient care.

In addition, a 2018 analysis of over 900 medication incidents associated with patient harm in community pharmacy found 3 key themes associated with these types of incidents. One of the three main themes was *Communication Gaps*, which included issues such as *Interprofessional Collaboration*.

This highlights the importance of collaboration and why it is critical for pharmacy technicians to **communicate and collaborate** effectively with everyone around them. Failure to do so can jeopardize patient care.

References:

- <https://www.coursera.org/articles/communication-effectiveness>
- <https://www.ismp.org/resources/disrespectful-behavior-healthcarehave-we-made-any-progress-last-decade>
- <https://www.ismp-canada.org/download/PharmacyConnection/PC2018WIN-HarmCommunityPharmacy.pdf>