

Pharmacy Awareness Month



Capital Health

March is Pharmacy Awareness Month! Every day, the work of pharmacy teams across the Capital District Health Authority benefits patients and healthcare teams in hospitals and communities throughout Nova Scotia. The theme for this year's Pharmacy Awareness Month is "**Pharmacists: Trusted Care When and Where You Need it.**" Pharmacists – trusted and valued members of the healthcare team – work closely with patients, physicians, nurses, and other health professionals to ensure that medication use is safe and effective. Pharmacists play an important role in the provision of evidence-based patient care through participation in medication reconciliation, interprofessional patient care rounds, care plan development, drug therapy problem resolution, and patient education. A recent and very exciting development is the ability to provide an expanded scope of services such as drug administration by injection and ordering of lab tests, all aimed at improving care for patients.

Research shows that having a pharmacist as part of the healthcare team results in better health outcomes, improved patient safety, and reduced healthcare costs. The government saves up to \$4.00 for every \$1.00 spent on pharmacy medication management services, enabling a more sustainable healthcare system.^{1,2} Pharmacist involvement with patient care has also been associated with fewer hospital readmissions, shorter lengths of stay, and fewer medication safety incidents.^{3,4}

Integral to the success of our pharmacy department are pharmacy assistants and pharmacy technicians. As this group of professionals works hard to ensure the smooth day to day operation of the pharmacy department and the provision of safe medication therapy for our patients; they are also moving towards professional licensure in the province of Nova Scotia. Our pharmacy technicians are involved in important patient care and organizational initiatives including performing the first step in medication reconciliation in the Emergency Departments and pre-admission clinics, clinical support roles in patient care areas, medication safety activities, and implementation of automated dispensing cabinets (Pyxis®) just to name a few.

At Capital Health, Pharmacy provides drug distribution services to all patients as well as clinical pharmacy services to several inpatient and outpatient areas. Among our distribution services, we provide unit dose medications, Total Parenteral Nutrition, Chemotherapy, and IV Admixture Services. We also provide a Regional Drug Information Service and have drug evaluation and utilization programs. We are involved extensively in research through our own staff-initiated research projects and support for clinical trials. We provide excellent precepting and learning opportunities for pharmacy students, pharmacy technician students, and pharmacists. A Canadian Hospital Pharmacy Residency Board accredited residency program graduates two residents each year.

To celebrate the success of the pharmacy department during Pharmacy Awareness Month, our pharmacy staff will host information booths on each Tuesday in the month of March (March 3, 10, 17, 24) between 12 and 1 pm. The booths will be set up adjacent to the cafeterias at the Halifax Infirmary, Victoria General, and Dartmouth General sites. Pharmacy information booths will also be set up throughout the month of March at the Hants Community Hospital, the Nova Scotia Hospital and East Coast Forensics. Staff are invited to visit the booths to hear about pharmacy services and chat with members of the Pharmacy Team. Visitors to the booths can also take the pharmacy quiz for a chance to win a prize. On Tuesday, March 24 drop by our booth and join us for some cake to celebrate the pharmacy team! We look forward to seeing you.

Anne Hiltz, Director, Pharmacy and Renal Program

¹Pharmacotherapy 2008; ²Houle, 2014 Systematic Review; ³2013 Cochrane Systematic Review; ⁴Makowsky, MJ et al 2009