



College of Pharmacists
of British Columbia

**PRACTICE
REVIEW
PROGRAM** 

Collaboration

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

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

Collaboration

Pharmacy technicians play a key role as part of the healthcare team consisting of patients, peers, and practitioners. Working together effectively as a team will ensure the best possible outcomes for your patients.

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 may assume anyone working behind the pharmacy counter is a pharmacist, while healthcare providers may assume anyone answering the phone is a pharmacist. Clearly identifying your registrant class when answering phone calls, or wearing a name badge with your registrant class displayed will help the public and other health professionals understand what your role is.

As a pharmacy technician in a multi-disciplinary team of healthcare professionals, it is important to establish your role relative to the roles of the other members of the healthcare team.

Another important scope of a pharmacy technician's practice involves **working constructively** and **communicating effectively** with everyone they interact with.

Working constructively is essential for good patient care and to achieve the outcomes that the team sets out to accomplish. For example, the *NAPRA Model Standards of Practice for Canadian Pharmacy Technicians* outlines working constructively as:

1. Developing collaborative relationships with pharmacists and other healthcare professionals
2. Co-operating with and showing respect for all members of the inter-professional team
3. Recognizing and working within one's scope of practice and limits of competence

4. Referring patients and other healthcare professionals to the pharmacist for any question or issue that potentially requires patient assessment, clinical analysis or application of therapeutic knowledge
5. Acting as positive role models
6. Fulfilling one's roles and obligations to colleagues in a timely manner
7. Ensuring activities are consistent with the healthcare goals of maintenance of wellness and health promotion
8. Adhering to laws, regulations and policies applicable to pharmacy practice
9. Participating as a team member in organized initiatives for disaster and emergency preparedness
10. Promoting understanding of the pharmacy technician role and its relationship to the roles of other healthcare providers

Communication

Communicating effectively is a good way to help keep your patients safe. Good communication between pharmacy technicians and patients or practitioners can prevent errors that could harm a patient. This includes ensuring both verbal AND written communication are effective and clear. All communication with patients and healthcare professionals should be conducted with sensitivity to patient confidentiality, respect, and empathy.

For example, the *NAPRA Model Standards of Practice for Canadian Pharmacy Technicians* outlines communicating effectively as:

1. Demonstrating comprehension and proficiency in written and verbal English or French
2. Selecting and using effective verbal, non-verbal, listening and written communication skills
3. Communicating with sensitivity, respect and empathy
4. Managing conflict in a professional manner
5. Respecting patient confidentiality
6. Listening to patients and respect their views about their health and drugs
7. Maintain confidentiality while using communication techniques appropriate for patients or other healthcare professionals
8. Obtaining from and sharing information with patient's care providers or other healthcare professionals as required:
 - a. in accordance with applicable laws, regulations and policies, and;
 - b. to support safe and effective therapy

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”.

Written notes that a pharmacy technician leaves for another pharmacy member should be clearly written with as much information as possible so that the pharmacy member it is intended for has all the information they need to carry on the work they may need to accomplish. For example, when leaving a note for a colleague, include 2 patient-specific identifiers, your own identity, the date and time the note was taken, and what is incomplete and still needs to be done.

Scope of Practice

Another key aspect of collaboration is practising within the scope expected of you by the healthcare team.

From HPA Bylaws Schedule F Part 1 - Section 4(1) & (2) and HPA Bylaws Schedule F Part 2 – Section 10(1) & (2):

(1) Pharmacy technicians in a community pharmacy, hospital pharmacy, or hospital pharmacy satellite 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/dispensed prescription,
- (e) performing the final check of a prepared/dispensed 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, hospital pharmacy, or hospital pharmacy satellite 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) sections 13, 15, or 16 of *HPA Bylaws Schedule F Part 2*, or
 - (iii) Part 4 of this Schedule, or
- (c) dispense a drug pursuant to *HPA Bylaws Schedule F Part 5*

While a pharmacy technician may prepare, process, or compound prescriptions within their scope based on current pharmacy bylaws, there are some activities that they must **AVOID** performing. For example, this includes tasks such as:

- Evaluating the therapeutic suitability of a drug for its intended use
- Assessing and correcting drug therapy problems
- Authorizing prescription renewals
- Adjusting quantities of drug to be dispensed
- Updating and evaluating a patient's drug history
- Reviewing PharmaNet profiles along with evaluating the appropriateness of drug therapy and correcting drug therapy problems
- Providing patient consultation
- Administering an injection
- Provide clinical services for Residential Care facilities
- Dispensing a drug for Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID)

The above tasks would all be considered to be **OUTSIDE** of a pharmacy technician's scope of practice.

Keep in mind, practicing within one's own scope is not only important to ensure each healthcare professional is doing what they are best trained to do, but it is also a legal requirement.

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 **work constructively** and **communicate effectively** with everyone around them. Failure to do so can jeopardize patient care.

<https://www.ismp.org/resources/disrespectful-behavior-healthcare-have-we-made-any-progress-last-decade>
<https://www.ismp-canada.org/download/PharmacyConnection/PC2018WIN-HarmCommunityPharmacy.pdf>