



For immediate release

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

March 3, 2010

### **Get to Know Your Local Pharmacist During Pharmacist Awareness Week**

The Pharmacists' Association of Saskatchewan, together with the Saskatchewan College of Pharmacists and the Saskatchewan branch of the Canadian Society of Hospital Pharmacists, are pleased to announce that Pharmacist Awareness Week is taking place in Saskatchewan from March 1-6, 2010. During the week, the three organizations encourage everyone to get to know their community and hospital pharmacists, who are important members of their health care team.

“Not only are pharmacists medication experts who have completed years of university study and training, they also provide education and counselling on a variety of health care issues,” says Dawn Martin, Executive Director of the Pharmacists' Association of Saskatchewan. “Whether they are at your community pharmacy, in your local hospital, or behind the scenes in drug research, regulation and education, your pharmacist cares about your health and is working with other professionals to provide quality and improved health care.”

Pharmacist Awareness Week, which has been officially declared in the province by the Province of Saskatchewan, is designed to spread the news about the vital health care initiatives and programs that our province's pharmacists provide.

“During Pharmacist Awareness Week, we want to share the message that your pharmacist knows,” says Ray Joubert, Registrar of the Saskatchewan College of Pharmacists. “Your pharmacist is an accessible and professional source of information for drug-related questions and concerns, and the health care professional most knowledgeable about drugs and their effects. We encourage people in Saskatchewan to establish a relationship with a local pharmacy; make it your pharmacy.”

Brenda Schuster, President of the Saskatchewan branch of the Canadian Society of Hospital Pharmacists, adds, “The celebration of Pharmacist Awareness Week is an excellent reminder that community and hospital pharmacists in Saskatchewan are equipped and ready to help in a wide range of areas. The roles and responsibilities of hospital pharmacists are very important to the care of patients during their hospital stay. We work with all members of the team to ensure safe and effective drug therapy with the goal of improving the care of patients.”

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Saskatchewan is home to over 1,200 licensed pharmacists. As the drug experts in health care, pharmacists have completed university study and training not only about medication, but also the human body. Throughout their career, pharmacists, who are registered with the Saskatchewan College of Pharmacists, complete ongoing professional development to stay up to date with the latest in health care.

This life-long learning is crucial as the profession of pharmacy continues to change in order to better suit patients' needs.

“In the past 20 years, pharmacy has expanded its role in health care. Instead of spending their time counting tablets and measuring liquids as they did in the past, today's pharmacists are part of your health care team,” says Harold Just, Chair of PAS. “Other health care professionals, including physicians and nurses, trust pharmacists to provide them with accurate and reliable information and recommendations about medication use.”

One recent change for pharmacists in the province is an increased role in primary health care. A pilot project introduced by Saskatchewan Health in 2008 has supported the integration of pharmacists into primary health care teams throughout the province, including remote locations. These pharmacists work closely with the other members of the health care team, providing support in medication review, drug information, education and counselling, and drug monitoring.

Pharmacists also help patients manage their chronic conditions like diabetes, asthma or high blood pressure, and advise patients on how to adopt a healthy lifestyle to prevent disease. Many pharmacists in Saskatchewan have special training as Diabetes Educators, Asthma Educators, and other specialities.

Through PACT (Partnership to Assist With the Cessation of Tobacco), pharmacists are helping patients kick the tobacco habit. Approximately 300 PACT pharmacists in Saskatchewan have been trained under the program, which is a free service. PACT pharmacists provide specialized support to people who are trying to quit tobacco for good.

The Pharmaceutical Information Program (PIP) is another service that pharmacists use to improve patient safety. Through PIP, pharmacists have confidential access to patient medication records. When filling out prescriptions, pharmacists can refer to PIP to assess the safety and effectiveness of the drug therapy, alert the physician to potential drug interactions, and avoid duplication. Pharmacists can also refer to PIP to provide counselling on medication use and treatment plans.

With these ongoing changes and innovations in pharmacist-provided services, pharmacists continue to play an integral role on the health care team.

During Pharmacist Awareness Week, events and activities will be taking place across the province to share the news about pharmacist-provided programs and initiatives. At the University of Saskatchewan, the Canadian Association of Pharmacy Students and Interns (CAPSI) will be holding numerous events for the week. CAPSI will be hosting informational booths and seminars on campus to address various health care concerns. Pharmacy students will also visit local elementary schools during the week to provide *Medicine and You* presentations. For more information about CAPSI events, visit [www.usask.ca/pharmacy-nutrition](http://www.usask.ca/pharmacy-nutrition).

For more information about Pharmacist Awareness Week and pharmacist-provided programs in Saskatchewan, contact Janice Burgess, Director of Professional Practice, Pharmacists' Association of Saskatchewan, at (306) 359-7277 or [janice.burgess@skpharmacists.ca](mailto:janice.burgess@skpharmacists.ca).