

## **The Many Faces of Pharmacists**

Pharmacists are the most accessible health provider in the system. They are well positioned to provide information and support to Saskatchewan residents on medication management, health promotion, and minor ailments. Pharmacists work in many different settings, all of which are dedicated to improving patient care.

Community pharmacists are available through the province in pharmacies and are often the people you talk regarding your drug therapy. Many community pharmacists are also specialists in chronic disease management.

For example, pharmacists provide specific information related to diabetes, asthma, menopause and other conditions. Without appointment, and outside of regular business hours, pharmacists are available and happy to lend a hand and provide some expertise. Whether it has to do with quitting smoking, choosing a cough medicine, or inquiring into the side effects of a prescription medication, your pharmacist is a well of knowledge.

Less visible, but equally as crucial to patient care are hospital pharmacists. These pharmacists work in acute care and rural hospitals, rehabilitation centres, cancer centres, primary care practices, administration, ambulatory clinics (such as Anticoagulation Management Services, Home Dialysis, Mosaic Heart Failure Clinic, and the Saskatchewan Transplant Program). Counseling patients and families, monitoring drug levels and initiating dosage adjustments, educating other health care professionals, critically reviewing and partaking in clinical trials, participating in formal medical rounds on intensive care units (including adult, pediatric, and neonatal), and conducting research are just a snapshot of the activities of a hospital pharmacist.

Primary care is a relatively new field in pharmacy. Under pilot programs, Saskatchewan pharmacists have been introduced into primary health care sites where they work closely with patients and other health care providers. Pharmacists contribute to the most comprehensive care program possible. Early research results are confirming that having pharmacists involved leads to an increase in positive patient outcomes.

Pharmacists are also involved in academic and research positions, where new pharmacists are groomed, drug programs are developed, and new perspectives on patient care are born. Pharmacy students currently complete hospital internships in their third and fourth years of school. They are exposed to the different aspects of pharmacy, they start to develop clinical skills and they contribute to research initiatives. Students learn the importance of working as a team and the different ways they can improve patient outcomes.

Though the hospital patient does not necessarily interact with a pharmacist or witness the care the pharmacist provides, their health is improved as a result. The diligent work done by pharmacists helps keep us safe, happy and healthy

Take a moment to talk to your pharmacist – they can help you and your family with your health and medication questions.