

Ghosts of Pharmacy Past, Present, and Future

Neil J MacKinnon

"I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future!"
Scrooge repeated, as he scrambled out of bed. "The Spirits of
all Three shall strive within me. Oh Jacob Marley! Heaven,
and the Christmas Time be praised for this!"
A Christmas Carol, Charles Dickens, 1843

It may seem strange to reference *A Christmas Carol* at this time of year, but it is one of my all-time favourite stories. I love the character transformation that occurs in the miser Scrooge after he is visited by the ghosts of Christmas past, present, and future. The ghosts remind him of his origins, give him a broader perspective of current conditions, and provide a glimpse of the future, should he stay on his present course. If there were ghosts of hospital pharmacy past, present, and future, I wonder what they would reveal to us, and whether their revelations would change our current actions.

I recently read an unpublished manuscript by Jessie I MacKnight about hospital pharmacy practice in Atlantic Canada from 1940 to 1964. A hospital pharmacy course was first offered by the Maritime College of Pharmacy (now the College of Pharmacy within Dalhousie University) in 1931. By 1940, the top issues facing hospital pharmacy in Canada were identified as "the need for a unified curriculum for Hospital Pharmacy in Canadian Colleges of Pharmacy, the type and length of apprenticeship for hospital pharmacists, and the provision of a badly-needed Hospital Formulary for Canada." Sound familiar?

Today, we hospital pharmacists can be proud of our recent accomplishments, yet we should continue to strive for the advancement of our profession and for a safer and more effective medication-use system. A generation has passed since

the advent of pharmaceutical care, yet it is still not uniformly provided to all inpatients in Canadian hospitals. Pharmacists may have escaped the basements of our nation's hospitals, but have we succeeded in becoming indispensable members of the health care team on the wards?



What, then, can be said about the future of hospital pharmacy practice? This is certainly a focus for the CSHP Council. We are targeting practice excellence through the CSHP 2015 initiative, we are finalizing a new strategic plan, and we have struck a new task force looking at the role of pharmacy technicians within our organization. If you are a clinical pharmacist, I challenge you to dream about what your own practice might look like in 5 years, and if you are a pharmacy manager or director, to think about what your department might look like in the same time frame.

So, let us remember the past, live in the present, and look toward the future, building upon our rich history, mindful of our current conditions, and dreaming about what might be.

Neil J MacKinnon, BSc(Pharm), MSc(Pharm), PhD, FCSHP, is President and Vision Liaison of CSHP.